THE PINES OF LORY

J. A. MITCHELL

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"It is no gardener's cottage"

THE

PINES OF LORY

J. A. MITCHELL

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Introduction

I think one reason why Mitchell's books have to be reprinted is that he wrote them for fun. During all or nearly all the period when he wrote stories his main occupation was with LIFE—to start it, guide it, keep it going, make it pay. Writing stories was his recreation. He did it because it made him happy.

Mitchell was full of art. It showed in everything he did—in his work in LIFE and just as much in his writings. He was a very good writer, and constantly in practice, as Du Maurier was, in scrutinizing and weighing the words that were to go under pictures. To put just the right text under a picture of contemporary life is a very pretty job and involves an accurate sense of the value of words and of brevity.

Another thing that makes Mitchell's books continue to be interesting is his imagination. He never was tied down to earth, to things as they are, to things that are likely to happen. He wrote about things that he derived from the back of his mind. A very practical man, duly thrifty,

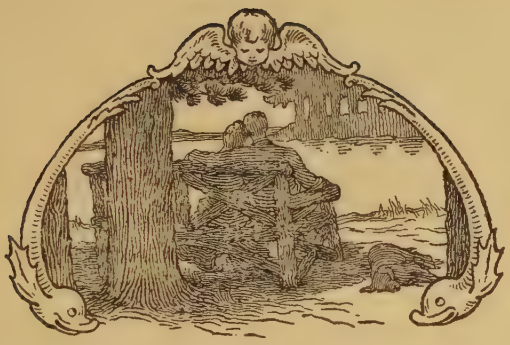
duly appreciative of actualities, still he was always dreaming dreams of a sort and seeing visions. They were mostly visions of romance. He was indeed an incurable romancer, not a realist at all. He thought, I suspect, that the chief end of man was woman. Anyhow he wrote as though he did. He always loved lovers and took it for granted that they would be constant and continuous.

He loved dogs too and horses, but especially dogs, and having lived seven years in France, he loved France out of which he got the art that was in him and an appreciable part of his sentiments about life.

The Pines of Lory is a love story with lots of imagination and a dog and a piece of France and a pair of lovers in it, which is just what one had a right to expect from Mitchell. Incidentally he has recorded with some energy an objection to likely young girls being run into convents, which objection also was strong in him.

So there is good measure of Mitchell in *The Pines of Lory,* very good; and very pleasant medicine it all is for these distracting times.

EDWARD S. MARTIN.



TO

ALL LOVERS OF LOVERS

AND LOVERS OF OUT-OF-DOOR THINGS

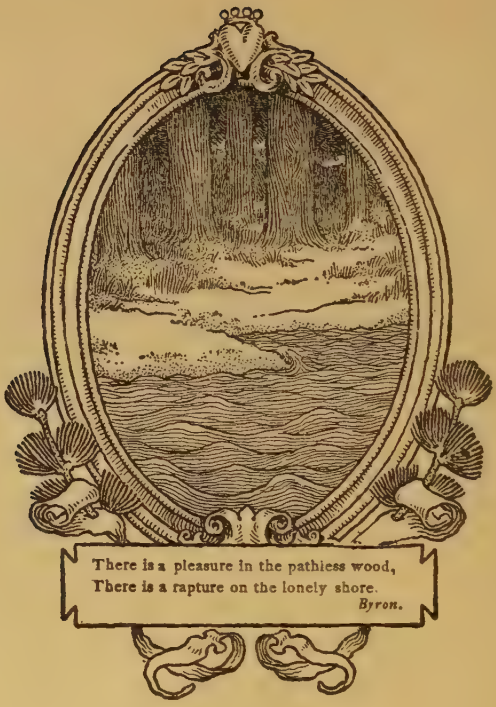
AND MILDER FORMS OF

FOLLY

THIS BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED



There is a pleasure in the pathless wood,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore.
Byron.

I

A RELIC FROM AFRICA

THE *Maid of the North* was ready for sea.

Only the touch of the engineer was wanting to send her, once again, on a homeward voyage to the St. Lawrence. Meanwhile, in solemn undertones, she was breathing forth her superabundant steam.

Behind the wharf lay the city of Boston.

A score of passengers, together with friends who had come aboard to see them off, were scattered about the little steamer. Among them, on the after deck, indifferent to the hot June sun, moved a gentleman of aristocratic mien. His raiment was above reproach. He gave the impression of being a distinguished person. But this impression was delusive, his distinction being merely social. He was too

well provided for, too easily clever and in too many ways, to achieve renown in any field requiring serious labor.

He inhaled the salt air as it came in from the sea, took out his watch, scanned the wharf, picked a thread from his sleeve, and twirled, somewhat carefully, the ends of a yellow moustache. His glance moved indifferently over various passengers and things about him until it rested on a man, not far away. The man was leaning against the railing of the deck watching the scene upon the wharf below.

The extreme attenuation of this person had already rendered him an object of interest to several passengers. His clothing hung loosely from his shoulders. Both coat and vest were far too roomy for the body beneath, while the trousers bore no relation to his legs. But the emaciated face, deeply browned by exposure, told a story of hardship and starvation rather than of ordinary sickness. Two thin, dark hands that rested on the ship's rail seemed almost transparent.

The aristocratic gentleman regarded this person with increasing interest. He approached the railing himself and furtively studied the stranger's profile. Then, with an expression in

his face less blasé than heretofore, he approached the man and stood behind him. Laying a hand on one of the shoulders to prevent his victim turning, he said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but could you tell me the name of this town?"

There was a short silence. Then the stranger answered, in a serious tone, and with no effort to see his questioner:

"This is Boston, the city of respectability — and other delights."

"Yes?"

"It is also the home of a man who does n't seem to have matured with the passing years."

"Well, who is that man?"

"A fellow that might have been a famous tenor if he had a voice — and some idea of music."

The other man laughed, removed his hand, and his friend turned about. Then followed a greeting as between old intimates, long separated. And such was the mutual pleasure that a neighboring spectator, many years embittered by dyspepsia, so far forgot himself as to allow a smile of sympathy to occupy his face.

The countenance of the attenuated person was unusual; not from any peculiarity of fea-

ture, but from its invincible cheerfulness. This cheerfulness was constitutional, and contagious. His face seemed nearly ten years younger than it was; for the unquenchable good-humor having settled there in infancy had thwarted the hand of time. No signs of discouragement, of weariness or worry had gained a footing. There were no visible traces of unwelcome experience. While distinctly a thoughtful face, good-humor and a tranquil spirit were the two things most clearly written. His eyes were gray — frank, honest, mirthful, with little wrinkles at the corners when he smiled.

After many questions had been asked and answered, the more pretentious gentleman laid a hand affectionately on the other's arm, and said:

"But what has happened to you, Pats? How thin you are! You look like a ghost — a mahogany ghost."

"Fever. A splendid case of South African fever."

"Too bad! Are you well over it?"

"Yes, over the fever; but still tottery. My strength has not come home yet. And the lead was a set back."

"You mean bullets?"

"Yes. I caught two, but they are both out. I am getting along all right now."

"And you have just reached America?"

"Landed in New York yesterday; got here this morning at half-past seven, found my family were up on the St. Lawrence, and here I am. But what are you doing on this boat?"

"Oh, I just came down to see somebody off."

An excess of indifference in the manner of this reply did not escape the friend from Africa. With a sidelong glance at his companion, he said, "A man, of course."

"How clever you are, Pat."

"No need of being clever, Billy, when you advertise your secret by blushing like a girl of fifteen."

"Blush! I, blush! How old do you think I am? Ten?"

"Yes all of that. But if you did n't actually blush, old man, you did look foolish. And this explains a state-room full of flowers that I noticed. Is that *her* bower?"

"I think so."

"Well, who is she, Billy? You might as well tell me, for I shall be sure to discover if she goes on this boat."

"Elinor Marshall."

"Elinor Marshall? Why, that name is familiar. Where have I heard it?"

"She is a friend of your sisters."

"Of course!"

"And she is going to your place now, on a visit."

"Good! I'll cut you out. Is she fond of bones?"

Mr. William Townsend did not answer, but he looked at his watch. "She ought to be here now. The boat sails at ten-thirty, does n't it?"

"Yes."

"It 's ten, now. I shall trot you up as soon as she arrives."

"Thanks. You will excuse my asking a cruel question, old man, but you certainly did not send *all* the flowers in that cabin?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then there are other — appreciators?"

"Yes."

Mr. Patrick Boyd, with a slight gesture toward two carefully attired gentlemen who were pacing the wharf, raised his eyebrows interrogatively.

His companion smiled. "Yes. She can also have either of them, and without the asking."

The attenuated man regarded the two gentlemen with interest. "That chap has a familiar face."

"Which? The one with the bouquet?"

"No, the one with the nose."

"That 's Hamilton Goddard."

"To be sure! And I should know his friend was a lover. His anxious glances up the wharf, and those flowers give him away. Such roses are for no aunt or sister."

"Better for him if they were!"

"Why? No chance?"

"Well, that is not for me to say. But he is one of those fearfully earnest chaps, with a tragic soul, and a rebuff would be a dangerous thing for him."

"Poor devil!"

And the man of cheerful countenance slowly wagged his head, as he added, in a sympathetic voice, "This being in love seems a painful pleasure."

Mr. William Townsend regarded his friend with half-shut eyes, and asked, "Are you still the superior person who defies the — the malady?"

"Even so."

"You never had it?"

"Never."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty."

"Then it's a lie."

"It's the truth. Of course I have known very fine girls who caused the usual thrills, whose conservatory kisses I should never undervalue. But when it comes to the fatuous delirium — the celestial idiocy that queers the brain and impairs the vision — why, I have been unlucky, that's all."

"You are a liar, Pats. Just a liar."

"Mumps have been mine, and measles; and I have fooled with grape juice, but that other drunkenness has been denied me."

His companion's grunt of incredulity was followed by the exclamation:

"There she comes!"

The two men below had halted, wheeled about, and were watching an approaching carriage. Down the wharf with this equipage came an atmosphere of solidity and opulence, of luxury and perfect taste. On the box, in quiet livery, sat a driver and a footman. The driver, from his bearing and appearance, could easily have passed for the president of a college. As the carriage halted before the gang plank,

the gentleman with the nose stepped forward and opened the door, while he of the roses stood by with a radiant visage, his hat in one hand, his offering in the other.

First, emerged an elderly gentleman, tall, slender, and acutely respectable. After him, a girl descended, also tall and slender. She was followed by a maid, and a Catholic priest. As the young lady stood for a moment conversing with the two admirers, her glance, in running over the little steamer, encountered Mr. Townsend, and she nodded pleasantly.

"Lovely! Enchanting!" murmured the man from Africa.

"Of course she is! Come down, and I 'll present you."

"But, first, tell me something about her. What are the interesting facts?"

"Why, there 's nothing to tell — that I can think of."

"Of course there is! There must be! Women like that don't bloom in every garden. What a patrician type! And all that black hair! She is unusual."

"Well, she *is* unusual, Pats. She is a splendid girl, — an orphan; and she is giving her fortune all away."

"The devil! And to whom?"

"To philanthropy; to societies for the advancement of woman, to hospitals and other bottomless pits. But above all to the Catholic Church."

"Too bad! She does n't look so unintelligent."

"No: and she is not. Her mother and sister, all that remained of her family, were both drowned in the same accident, and the shock upset her for a time."

"And it was then the Church got in its work? That explains the Holy Roman Cherub who seems to be along."

"Yes; that 's Father Burke. He is a part of the comedy."

"Comedy! It 's a blood-curdling drama! Has n't she a brother or some relative to reach out a hand and save her?"

"She does n't care to be saved. She is one of those women with a conscience. A big one. the sort that becomes a disease unless taken in time."

"I know. She feels guilty if she 's happy. But she does n't look all that. She seems a trifle earnest, perhaps, but very human, and with real blood in her veins."

Mr. Townsend sighed — a long, deep sigh that seemed to come from below his waist. "Yes, she was mighty good company and rather jolly before the vultures closed in on her."

"Is she really in the coils of the anaconda?"

"I am afraid so. She won't talk about it herself, — at least, not with Protestants, — but some of her friends say she thinks of going into a convent."

"Well," said Patrick Boyd, with a sudden warmth, as they turned to go below, "all I can say is, that the institution, sacred or secular, that tries to lure such a girl into a convent ought to be hustled into space."

"Amen to that!"

II

FROTH OF THE SEA

AN hour later, as the *Maid of the North* was steaming for the open sea, the man from Africa and his new acquaintance formed a group on the after deck.

The day was a rare one, even for early June. Across the surface of the water — now a sparkling, joyful blue — the air came free and full of life. This air was exhilarating. It inspired Father Burke to tell a funny anecdote, and he did it well. For not only did Father Burke possess a sense of humor, but his heavy, benevolent face, white hair, and deep voice gave unusual impressiveness to whatever he chose to utter. Even Mr. Appleton Marshall, a victim of acute Bostonia, eluded for a time his own self-consciousness. He soon went below, however, to revel, undisturbed, in a conservative

local paper. Mr. Patrick Boyd, — or Pats, as we may as well call him, — being always of a buoyant spirit, added liberally to the general cheer.

The young lady regarded this addition to her party with a peculiar interest. She knew that the mention of his name in his own family was for years a thing forbidden. Just how bad he was, or how innocent, she had never learned. And now, as she studied, furtively, this exile of uncertain reputation, and as she recognized the open nature, the fortitude, the tranquil spirit, all unmistakably written in his emaciated, sunburnt face, her curiosity was quickened. She knew that Sally, his elder sister, — her own intimate friend, — had persisted in a correspondence with her brother against her father's wishes. And that, perhaps, was in his favor. At least, he had a good mouth and honest eyes. His neck, his hands, and his legs were preternaturally thin, and she wondered if the gap between his collar and his throat told a truthful story of South African fever. If so, the change had been appalling. However, neither bullets nor fever had reduced his spirits.

The conversation touched on many things. When she happened to say that this was her

first visit to the Boyds' Canadian house, he replied:

"And mine too."

"Have you never seen it?" she asked in surprise.

"Never. My father bought this place about ten years ago, and I have been away over thirteen years."

"I had forgotten you had been away so long."

With a smile and a slight inclination of his head, he replied:

"That you should know of my existence is a flattering surprise. Any mention of my name, I understand, was a state's prison offence until my father died."

"Not quite so bad as that."

"A man's fame is not apt to flourish when corked up in a bottle and laid away in a closet, with 'Poison' on the label."

Here was a chance to gratify a natural curiosity, and he seemed willing to throw light on the mystery. She was about to offer the necessary encouragement, when Father Burke took the conversation into less personal fields. It may have been the contagion of this young man's cheerfulness, or the reaction on the lady's

part from an acute religious tension, but the priest had noticed Miss Marshall was awakening to a livelier enjoyment of her surroundings. The spontaneity and freedom of her laughter, on one or two occasions, had caused him a certain uneasiness. Not that Father Burke was averse to merriment. Too much of it, however, for this particular maiden and at this critical period, might cause a divergence from the Holy Roman path along which he now was escorting her. So he gave some interesting facts concerning this summer residence of the Boyds, winding up with the information that the hunting and fishing, all about there, were unusual.

"But we women cannot hunt and fish all day!"

"Perhaps it's like Heaven," said Pats, "where there's nothing to do except to realize what a good time you are having."

"I hope that is not your idea of a woman's ambition."

"What better business on a summer's day?"

"Many things," replied the priest, "if she has a soul to expand and a mind to cultivate."

"But I was speaking of the natural, unvarnished woman we all enjoy and are not afraid of."

Miss Marshall, in a politely contemptuous manner, inquired, "Then, personally, you find the intelligent woman of high ideals less congenial than — the other kind?"

"I find the superior woman with a gift of language is a thing that makes brave men tremble. I think wisdom should be tempered with mercy."

After a pause, and with a touch of sarcasm, she replied:

"That is quite interesting. A fresh point of view always broadens the horizon."

Ignoring her tone, he answered in an off-hand, amiable way:

"Of course there is no reason why a woman should not enter politics or anything else, if she wishes. And there is no reason why a rose should not aspire to be a useful potato. But potatoes will always be cheaper than roses."

She smiled wearily and leaned back. As their eyes met he detected a look of disappointment — perhaps at her discovery of yet one more man like all the others, earthy and superficial. But she merely said, and in a gentle tone:

"You forget that while all men are wise, all women are not beautiful."

With a deep sigh he replied, "The profundity

of your contempt I can only guess at. Whatever it is, I share it. We are a poor lot.

> "'At thirty, man suspects himself a fool;
> Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan.'

Which is all true except the last line."

She smiled. "You are too severe. I consider man the highest form of animal life — after the dog and the elephant."

"Then where does woman come in?"

"Oh — as man's satellite she is hard to place. Her proper position might be anywhere between the peacock and the parrot."

Pats shook his head, slowly and sadly. "That's an awful utterance!"

"But it enables you to realize her vanity in aspiring to the wisdom of man."

Father Burke laughed. "Fighting the Boer, Captain Boyd, is a different thing from skirmishing with the American girl."

"Indeed it is! For on the battle-field there is always one chance of victory. But I have not been fighting the Boers. I was trying to help the Boers against the English."

"Ah, good!" said the priest. "You were on the right side."

But the lady shook her head. "I don't know

about that. I should have joined the English and fought against the Boers."

"But, my dear child," exclaimed Father Burke, "the cause of the Boers is so manifestly the cause of right and justice! They were fighting for their freedom,—the very existence of their country."

"Possibly, but the English officers are very handsome, and so stylish! And the Boers are common creatures—mostly farmers."

Pats regarded her in surprise. "That does n't affect the principle of the thing. Even a farmer has rights."

"Principles are so tiresome!" and she looked away, as if the subject wearied her.

"Does it make no difference with your sympathies," he asked with some earnestness, "whether a man is in the right or in the wrong? Would you have had no sympathy for the Greeks at Marathon?"

She raised her eyebrows, and with a faint shrug replied, "I am sure I don't know. Was that an important battle?"

"Very"

"In South Africa?"

Pats thought, at first, this question was in jest. She looked him serenely in the face, how-

ever, and he saw nothing in her eyes but the expectation of a serious answer to a simple question. Before he was ready with a reply, she inquired:

"Were you at that battle?"

He was so bewildered by this question, and from such a woman, that for a moment he could not respond. Father Burke, however, in his calm, paternal voice, gave the required facts.

"The battle of Marathon was fought about twenty miles from Athens between the Greeks and invading Persians nearly five hundred years before Christ."

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" she murmured, indifferently, her eyes looking over the sea.

Pats, who was sitting in front of his two companions, regarded her in surprise. As she finished speaking, he turned away his head, but still watching her from the corners of his eyes. Her own glance, with an amused expression, went at once to his face, as he anticipated. He laughed aloud in a frank, boyish way as their eyes met. "I knew you had some sinister motive in that speech. You almost fooled me."

And she smiled as she retorted, "I was merely trying to please you. You say you are averse to intelligence in a woman."

"Well, I take it all back. I am averse to nothing in a woman, except absence."

Father Burke took all this in, and he disapproved. Captain Boyd was by no means the sort of man he would have selected for companion to this maiden. The young man's appreciation of the lady herself was too honest and too evident. It bore, to the observant priest, suspicious resemblance to a tender passion unskilfully concealed. Perilous food for a yearning spirit! Of course she was heavenly minded, and spiritual to the last degree, at present; but she was mortal. And the soul of a girl like Elinor Marshall was too precious an object to be thrown away on a single individual — above all, on a Protestant. Was it not already the property of The Church? And then, there was little consolation in the knowledge that she was to be in constant intercourse with this man for a week, and during that time beyond all priestly influence.

The *Maid of the North*, until she passed Deer Island, bore a cheerful band of passengers. Then, in the open sea, she turned her nose a little more to the north, and while riding the waves as merrily as ever, she did it with a

greater variety of motion. And this variety of motion, a complex, unhallowed shifting of the deck, first sidewise down, then lengthwise up, then all together and further down — with a nauseating quiver — was emphasized by zephyrs from the engine-room and kitchen — zephyrs redolent with oil and cooking and bilge water. All these, in time, began to trifle with the interiors of certain passengers, and to paralyze their mirth.

Among early victims was Mr. Appleton Marshall. After storing his mind with the financial news and social gossip of the morning paper, he had rejoined his friends. Sitting beside his niece, he participated, at intervals, in the conversation, his manner becoming more and more distant until, at last, it vanished altogether. To all who cared to see, it was plain that this stately and usually complacent gentleman was losing interest in external matters.

He seemed annoyed when a steward, about one o'clock, appeared on deck and rang a bell, announcing dinner. At this summons Patrick Boyd took out his watch and was obviously astonished at the flight of time.

"I had forgotten my friend," he exclaimed, and he hurried below.

At the dinner-table Elinor Marshall sat between her confessor and her uncle, the latter clinging bravely to his post through the soup and fish. Then, after watching for a moment the various viands as they rose and fell with the heaving of the ship, accompanied, as it seemed to him, by a similar rising and sinking of his own digestive apparatus, he remarked, with some severity, that he felt no hunger. And he left the table with dignity, yet with a certain expedition. As the uncle disappeared, Patrick Boyd came in and took a seat opposite the lady and the priest.

"How did you find your friend?" Father Burke inquired.

"Discouraged."

"Poor fellow! Nothing serious, I hope."

"No. But he does n't quite understand this starting right off again on another voyage."

"Is he — er — is his mind affected?"

This question appeared to surprise Captain Boyd. "No. But they have fastened him to a windlass, near the engine-room, and he resents it."

This reply merely intensified the curiosity of the questioner.

"Did you say they have fastened him?"

"Yes. It seems to be a rule of the boat."

The young lady also opened her eyes. After a pause, she inquired, in a low voice, "Is he dangerous?"

"No, indeed! Not at all!"

"Then why tie him?"

"It is a rule of the boat, as I said."

"A rule of the boat to tie passengers?"

At this question Pats smiled, for a light broke in upon him. "My friend is a dog. I thought I told you."

"A dog!" and she seemed to find diversion in the seriousness with which Father Burke accepted the explanation. "I love dogs. Why shouldn't I go down and see him?"

"The honor would be appreciated."

"I will go after dinner. What sort of a dog is he?"

"A setter."

"And what is his name?"

Pats hesitated. "Do you really wish to know?"

"Of course!"

"Well, his full name is Jan Bartholomeus Van Vlotens Couwenhorn Van der Helst Poffenburgh."

"Then he is Dutch."

"Yes. He was the property of four officers, and each owner bestowed a portion of his name."

"What do you call him for short?"

"Solomon."

"Solomon!"

"At first we called him Jan, but the other three sponsors objected. They said it was favoritism. So we all agreed on Solomon for every day use."

"And he never resented it?"

"No. He understood it as a tribute to his extraordinary wisdom."

She seemed amused. "Is he so very remarkable?"

"Well," said Pats, laying down his knife and fork, and giving his whole attention to the subject, "as to general intelligence, foresight, logic, and a knowledge of human nature, he is a wonder, even for a dog. And when it comes to dignity and tact, ease of manner and freedom from personal vanity, why — the other Solomon was a beginner."

She nodded and smiled approval. "I know something of dogs and men, and I can easily believe it. Certain men exist, however, who are mentally superior to dogs. But it's the

moral gulf between the two species that is so disheartening."

"All owing to the fatal power of speech."

"Possibly."

"I am sure of it. If dogs could talk, they would abuse the power, as humans do, and soon descend to the human level. They would lose the dignity that silence alone bestows, and become bores — like the rest of us." With a deferential movement of his head toward the priest, he added, "Except as they apply to myself, these remarks are in no way personal."

As Father Burke, with a perfunctory smile, bowed acknowledgment, the girl at his side inquired, with a serious face, "Well, what can be done?"

Pats, with equal seriousness, replied, "How would it do to establish an institute for the propagation of silence?"

"The millennium would be in sight!" she exclaimed.

"And instead of rhetoric and declamation teach economy in words; show the pupils by illustration and example how much better they look when their mouths are not open."

"A very sensible idea! And award medals to those who attain the highest flights of silence."

"The very thought is restful," said Pats. "And would you mind if I offered Solomon a professorship?"

"Not at all! It would look rather well in the catalogue, 'Solomon Boyd, Instructor in Moral Philosophy and Deportment.'"

With a glance at the mirthless face of the reverend gentleman beside her, she added, "And on the dome of the college shall be a colossal statue of Father Burke, in solid gold. He has not uttered a word in half an hour."

The priest answered pleasantly, but the tone of the conversation had given him little pleasure. Folly was in the air, and Elinor Marshall, to his surprise, seemed in harmony with it. Heretofore he had known her as a thoughtful, serious-minded woman, with a leaning to melancholy; and this unexpected and evidently enjoyable flight — or plunge — into pure nonsense, caused him a distinct uneasiness. The girl was brightening up, even becoming merry; a state of mind that never leads to a nunnery.

In this conversation, which ran on with rare intervals of seriousness until the meal was ended, Father Burke took no part. And when the younger people had gone below for their interview with Solomon, he decided, after long re-

flection, that considering the gravity of the case his obvious duty was to drop a word in the lady's ear concerning this new acquaintance. The rest of the Boyds — the two sisters — were good Catholics, and from them there was nothing to fear. But if he, Father Burke, could counteract the influence of this interesting heretic, it would be a pious work. He must find his opportunity for an earnest conversation, and before she landed.

The more he meditated, the more anxious he became. But Fate, the practical joker, — the fickle, the ruthless, the forever mocking, — was only waiting to lay his enemy at his feet.

III

A FOOL AT THIRTY

TOWARD the end of that day it became evident, in the west, that preparations were going on for an American sunset. Preliminary colors, chiefly gold and crimson, crept swiftly across the sky. These colors, more dazzling as the sun approached the water, were caught and tossed about upon the surface of the sea until all the universe seemed ablaze.

Of this gorgeous spectacle Elinor Marshall, in a sheltered corner of the deck, was an appreciative witness.

Pats, in his mercy, had decided to allow the lady a respite from his society, at least during a portion of the afternoon. The lady, however, was so much more interesting than anything else aboard that he finally ignored his better judgment.

And now, leaning against the rail in front of her, he found the sunset duller, more monotonous and commonplace than the human combination in the steamer-chair. She, however, her head thrown back, with half-closed eyes, seemed fascinated by the glories in the west, and almost unconscious of his presence. As too much staring might cause annoyance, he did most of it on the sly. And the opportunity was good. As a mystery, she proved an absorbing study: an irresistible blending of contradictions, of sympathy and reserve, of sadness — and of wit — of a character and temperament not half-divulged. Whenever their eyes met, he felt a mild commotion, a curious, unfamiliar excitement, — something that made him less at ease. For it invariably brought the keenest anxiety as to her good opinion. He also experienced a consciousness of guilt; why, he knew not, unless from the expression of her eyes. They seemed to be reading his thoughts, and to be a trifle saddened by the result. That, in itself, was disconcerting.

He began to see why those other fellows were in love with her. Although fireproof himself, he understood, now that he knew her better, the nature of the conflagration that devoured the men in Boston.

In her sensitive face, in her reserve, and in her sometimes melancholy air, he saw traces of inward struggles between a passionate, impulsive, pleasure-loving nature and standards of virtue unattainably high. And when he remembered that she was doomed to the seclusion of a convent, that this life, with every promise of being exceptionally rich and full, was to be crushed, deadened and forever lost to the outer human world, his resentment became difficult to suppress. He wondered, in a hot, disjointed way, if there was no possibility of a rescue.

Awakening from a revery, she caught him in the act, regarding her with earnest eyes, and with a frown. He also came back to earth — or to the boat — suddenly, and he observed a slight movement of her eyebrows as in surprise or disapproval. With a guilty air, he looked away, and she wondered if the warmer color in his mahogany cheeks came entirely from the sunset. After an awkward silence, he said.

"I beg your pardon for staring at you. You are so very contradictory, and in so many ways, that I took the liberty of guessing at your real character; whether after all you are unpleasantly perfect, or whether it is merely your luck to possess an awe-inspiring exterior."

She was unable to repress a laugh. "And what have you decided?"

"I have not decided; that is, not finally. I keep arriving at new conclusions. My first impression was that you were a person of frigid altitudes, — severe, exacting, and abnormally superior. Then, later, I have thought you warm-hearted — even impulsive: that your indifference is not always real. But of that, I am not sure. Still, I believe you possess a lower and a better nature."

"You seem to have made wonderful discoveries in a very few hours."

"I have been working hard."

"I hope the verdict is favorable."

"Well, yes — in a way."

"So bad as that!"

"No, not bad at all. It is merely that you have bullied your natural character. You have made it toe the mark and behave itself. Never given it any vacations, perhaps."

She regarded him intently, as if in doubt as to his meaning.

"But you don't know the cause," he added.

She made no reply.

"The cause," he said, "is the expression of your face."

"Ah!"

"Yes. It is impossible for any being of earthly origin to possess the celestial qualities promised in your countenance. It is out of harmony with terrestrial things. Why, when those three men put out their hands this morning for you to touch, I held my breath at their presumption. I looked for three bolts from heaven to wither the extended arms."

"And your own face, Mr. Boyd, gives no indication of the subtleness of your irony: unkind, perhaps, but extremely clever."

"Irony! Never! I had no such thought! I am merely announcing the discovery that with a different exterior you would have been less perfect; but more comfortable."

"If this is not irony, it is something still more offensive. I gave you credit for a finer touch."

"I may be clumsy, but not malicious."

"Then explain."

"Well, you see, having a tender conscience, you have felt a sense of fraud whenever confronted by your own reflection. Being human, you have had, presumably, ambitions, envies, appetites, prejudices, vanities, and other human ills of which the face before you gave no indica-

tion. And so, feeling the preternatural excellence of that face a lie, you have tried to live up to it; that is, to avoid being a humbug. In short, your life has been a strenuous endeavor to be unnecessarily wise and impossibly good."

As their side of the steamer rose high above the sea, after an unusual plunge, he added: "And I am afraid you have succeeded."

She remained silent, lost apparently in another revery, watching the changes in the west.

The light was fading. On sea and sky a more melancholy tone had come, — dull, slaty grays crowding in from every quarter. And over the darkening waters there seemed a tragic note, half-threatening, intensified by every plunge of the steamer and by the swish of waters very near the deck. There was a touch of melancholy, also, in the steady thumping of the engines.

She said at last, pleasantly, but in a serious tone:

"I have been reflecting on your discourse. If ironical, it was unkind. If sincere, it was — not impertinent perhaps, but certainly not justified by our short acquaintance."

"True: and I beg your pardon. But was it correct?"

"I hope not."

Something in her manner invited a discontinuance of that particular topic. He drew an attenuated hand across his mouth, changed his position, as if on the point of saying more; but he held his peace.

Some minutes later, when Miss Marshall's maid approached this silent couple, her progress, owing to the movement of the deck, consisted of rapid little runs followed by sudden pauses, during which she hung with one hand to the rail and with the other clutched her hat. She had come up to ask if her mistress needed anything. Was she warm enough? Would she have another wrap? Miss Marshall needed nothing herself, but asked for news of Mr. Appleton Marshall, and if Father Burke was feeling better. Louise had seen nothing of Mr. Marshall since dinner, but she had left Father Burke reclining in the main saloon, not very sick, nor very well, but lower in his mind. As her maid departed, the lady expressed sympathy for the suffering uncle. "And poor Father Burke! He is terribly uncomfortable, I am sure."

"Yes," said Pats. "I saw in his face a look of uncertainty: the wavering faith that comes from meals with an upward tendency."

Pats thought this want of sympathy was resented.

"He is a most lovable man," she said, "of fine character, and with a splendid mind. You would like him if you knew him better."

Here was his opportunity; his chance for a rescue. He would snatch her from the clutches of the Romish Brute. A few stabs in the monster's vitals might accomplish wonders. So he answered, sadly, in a tone of brotherly affection:

"I like him now. That is why I regret that he should devote himself to such a questionable enterprise."

"What enterprise?"

"His Church."

With a forced calmness she replied, "This is the only time I ever heard the first religion of Christendom called a 'questionable enterprise.'"

"Leo X. spoke of it as a 'profitable fable.' Perhaps that was better."

"Did Leo X. say that of the Catholic Church?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it."

"Because you have too high an opinion of Leo?"

"No; but he was a Pope of Rome, and I simply cannot believe it."

"Some popes of Rome have been awful examples for the young."

"So have men in all positions."

He smiled and shook his head. "Yes, but when they set up as Christ's apostles, they really should not indulge too freely in assassination and torture: at least, not out of business hours."

Then in a reflective, somewhat sorrowful manner, he continued, "But the Roman Enterprise has two enemies that are thorns in the flesh, the bath-tub and the printing-press. Wherever they march in, she marches out. The three can't live together."

Of this statement there was no recognition, except a straightening up in the steamer-chair.

He continued pleasantly, "In England, Germany, and America, for instance, where these adversaries are in vogue, Catholicism quits. As the devil shrinks from the sign of the Cross, so does the Holy Enterprise gather up its bloody skirts and decamp."

"Perhaps you forget that in the United States alone there are more than seven million Catholics."

"But they are not victims of the bath-tub habit."

"That is not true! There are thousands of exceptions!"

He laughed — an amiable, jolly, yet triumphant laugh — as he retorted, "You admit the truth of it when you call them exceptions."

In the dim light which had gathered over everything, he could see the delicate eyebrows drawing together in a frown. But he went on, cheerfully, as if giving offence had not occurred to him, "Now Spain is enthusiastically Catholic. And for ignorance, — solid, comprehensive, reliable ignorance, — there is nothing like it in the solar system. You can't hurt it with a hammer. It defies competition. If a Spaniard were to meet a bath-tub on a lonely highway, he would cross himself and run."

"Their ignorance is their own fault. Education and progress have always been encouraged by the Catholic Church."

"Encouraged? Oh!"

"Certainly."

"You mean by the stake and boiling lead?"

"I do not."

"When, for example, she notified Galileo that she would roast him alive, as she had already

roasted Bruno, if he persisted in his heresy that the earth was round instead of flat?"

"If you are happy in that belief, I will not destroy it."

"It is a historic fact, but I am no happier for believing it. However, too much education is a nuisance, and very likely Mamma Church was wise in toasting an astronomer now and then."

"Your conclusions are rather entertaining. I am a Catholic myself, and my own reading has brought opinions that are quite different."

She spoke calmly, but he detected a less friendly tone. In a joking, incredulous manner he replied, "Well, then, I am a Catholic, too."

"I am serious. My faith to me is a sacred thing. It has brought me a more tranquil spirit, a deeper knowledge, and a fuller conception of what I owe to others — and to myself."

She was very much in earnest.

"Then I beg your pardon," he said, "for speaking as I did."

She tried to smile. "It is more my fault than yours. Religious discussions never do any good."

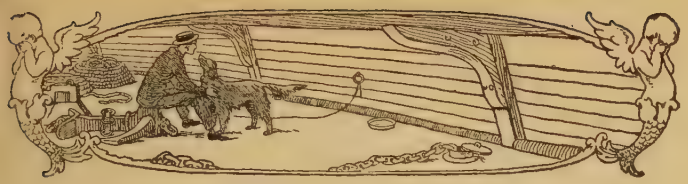
Then she arose from her chair, and he knew from the exceeding dignity of her manner that

his offence was serious. But this dignity met with cruel reverses. As she stood up, their side of the steamer was just starting on a downward lurch, — one of those long, deep, quivering plunges, apparently for the bottom of the sea, slow at first, but gaining in rapidity. And Elinor Marshall, instead of turning away with frigid ceremony, as she intended, first stood irresolute, as if taken unawares, — yet suspecting danger, — then tiptoed forward and rushed impetuously into the gentleman's arms. These arms were forced to encircle the sudden arrival, otherwise both man and woman would have tumbled to the deck. Then, she pushed him hard against the rail. But even that was not the end. For there she held him, to her shame, pressing against him with the whole weight of her body. And this lasted, it seemed to her, an hour — a year — a lifetime of mortification and of helpless rage; the wind all the time screaming louder and louder with a brutish glee.

Her choking exclamations of chagrin were close to his ears, and he felt her hair against his face. But he was powerless to aid in her struggles to regain the lost equilibrium. However good his wishes, he could do nothing but

stand as a cushion — poorly upholstered at that — between herself and the rail.

Finally, at the end of time, when the deck came up again, she backed away with flaming cheeks. Pats apologized; so did she. He wished to assist her to the cabin stairs, but the offer was ignored, and she left him.



IV

NORTHWARD

NOT since her change of faith — never in fact — had Elinor Marshall listened to such open abuse of a sacred institution. And the memory of it kept her wide awake during a portion of the night.

Although she had decided to ignore that argument of the printing-press and bath-tub, it wormed itself into the inner chambers of her brain; and it refused to make way for better thoughts. As the possessor of a despotic conscience she suffered the miseries of guilt. For despite all reasoning of her own, she began to feel that unless those arguments were refuted, her faith might suffer: and, with her, an untarnished faith was vital.

The motion of her berth, the rhythmic pounding of the engines, the muffled sound, at intervals, of feet upon the deck, all were soothing

but the remembrance of that discussion, with its mortifying climax, made sleep impossible. This childish sensitiveness she fully realized, — and despised, — but nerves achieved an easy victory over reason.

She was glad when daylight came. Long before the breakfast hour she left her state-room and sought the deck for fresh air, and for Father Burke. He, also an early riser, was discovered in the lee of the upper cabins, his little prayer-book in his hand. Sitting close beside him she gave, in detail, the story of her conversation with Mr. Boyd. It was in the nature of a confession, but delivered in the hope and in the faith of the enemy's discomfiture. She felt, of course, that the statements concerning the press and tub were false and foolish, and she knew that Father Burke could tell her why.

Her confidence was not misplaced. This was not the first time Father Burke had been called upon to stiffen the faith of wavering converts. Considerable experience and a perfect familiarity with the subject rendered the task an easy one. The tones of Father Burke's voice were, in themselves, almost sufficient for the purpose. Deep, calm, mellow, ravishingly sympathetic, they played like celestial zephyrs upon

the chords of the maiden's heart. They filled the inmost recesses of her soul with security and peace. His arguments were the old, familiar things, considerably damaged by Protestants and other heretics; but he knew his audience. And when the spell had worked, when the wings beside him ceased to flutter, he drove the final bolt.

"You know, my child, that the value of a statement depends largely upon the character of him who utters it. I have no desire to injure this young man, nor to prejudice you in any way against him. But it is clearly my duty to warn you that he is not a person with whom it would be safe for you to permit a very close acquaintance."

"You need have no anxiety on that point."

"I am very glad to hear it."

"But tell me what you know about him, Father Burke. His family never mentions his name, and I supposed there was something to conceal. Was it anything very bad?"

"Yes, bad enough. He is a wilful man, of a perverse and violent temper. His utterances of yesterday are in perfect accord with the spirit he displayed in youth. He broke his father's heart."

"From his face one would never suspect that part of it— the violent temper. He appears to be a person of unusual cheerfulness and serenity, — most *offensively* serene at times."

"Very possible, my child. One of the hardest things to learn, and we seldom achieve it in youth, is that outward appearances often bear no relation to the inner man, — that the most inviting face can hide a vicious nature."

"Do you really think him a bad man? I mean thoroughly unprincipled and wicked? I don't like him, but somehow it does n't seem as if he could be utterly bad, with such a face."

"Ah, my daughter, be on your guard against those very things! Heed the voice of experience. Remember his career."

"But what especial thing did he do? What drove him away from home?"

"In a fit of temper he tried to kill his father."

"Really!"

"As an old friend of the family, I knew the circumstances."

"Awful! How did it happen?"

"They were in the garden in an arbor, engaged in a controversy. In his anger he struck the old gentleman and knocked him

down, and would have killed him had not others interfered."

A silence followed, not broken by Father Burke. He desired his listener to realize the iniquity of the deed.

At last she inquired half timidly:

"And there was no provocation?"

"None whatever."

After another pause she said, reflectively:

"The father had a temper too, I fancy, from what I know of him."

Toward the face beside him the priest cast a sidelong look, which was detected.

"I am not defending the son," she said hastily. "Heaven forbid! I almost hate him. But you must admit that the father was not an especially lovable character, nor very gentle in his ways."

"He had his faults, like the rest of us; but he was a rare man,—a religious man of deep convictions, and the soul of honor."

"Yes, I suppose so, but I was always afraid of him."

Father Burke laid his hand on her arm and said, very gently but with unusual seriousness:

"I should regret exceedingly, my child, to have you listen to the flippant sacrilege of this

young man, or be subjected to his influence in any way."

"There is no cause for alarm. I shall have as little to do with him as possible."

"An excellent resolve. And now, will you grant me a request?"

"Certainly."

"I have no right to exact a promise. I only suggest that while on this boat you avoid, as far as possible, his companionship."

"I promise."

They both arose. His voice and manner were always impressive, even in ordinary conversation. But now a moisture gathered in the maiden's eyes as he gazed benignly into her face, and murmured in tones tremulous with feeling:

"May Heaven bless you, my daughter, for your noble spirit, and for your unswerving devotion to a holy cause."

Then they went below to breakfast.

The girl was hungry; Father Burke was not. The undulations of the boat so tempered his appetite that food had lost its charm. A cup of tea and a bite of toast were the limits of his endeavor. Even these descended under protest and threatened to return. When the heretic —

the victim of the plot — appeared soon after and took his seat at the table, he noticed that the greetings he received, while friendly and all that etiquette required, were less cordial than on the day before.

And this was emphasized later, when he joined Miss Marshall on the deck. After a moment's conversation, she spoke of letters to be written, and went below.

And once again, to make sure that this disgrace was no fancy of his own, he approached her as she sat reading, or at least, with a book in her hand. In his best and most easy manner, he inquired:

"Did you ever hear of the Magdalen Islands, Miss Marshall?"

She looked up, and nodded pleasantly.

"Well, we are passing them now."

"Indeed!"

"They are off there to the westward, between twenty and thirty miles away, but out of sight, of course."

Amiably she inclined her head in recognition of the news, but made no reply.

It began to be awkward for Pats. But he resolved to suppress any outward manifestations of that state. This task was all the harder, as

his legs embarrassed him. He knew them to be thin, — of a thinness that was startling and unprecedented, — and now, as he confronted the northeast wind, their shrunken and ridiculous outlines were cruelly exposed. He was sensitive about these members, and he thought she had glanced furtively in their direction. However, with his usual buoyancy he continued:

"And now we leave land behind us until we reach the northern shore of the Gulf."

"Yes?"

Although she gazed pensively over the water, and with conspicuous amiability, something seemed to suggest that the present conversation had reached a natural end. So the skeleton moved away.

With Pats a hint was enough. During the remainder of the voyage, at meals, and the few occasions on which he met the lady, he also was genial and outwardly undisturbed; but he took every care that she should be subjected to no annoyance from his companionship. This outward calmness, however, bore no resemblance to his inward tribulation. Such was his desire for her good opinion that this sudden plunge from favor to disgrace — or at least, to a frigid toleration — brought a keen distress. Moreover, he

was mortified at having allowed himself, under any pretext, to jeer at her religion.

"Ass, ass! Impossible ass!" he muttered a dozen times that day.

Meanwhile, the *Maid of the North* was driving steadily along, always to the north and east. On the morning of the second day her passengers had caught glimpses, to the larboard, of the shores of Nova Scotia. Later they rounded Cape Breton, and then, against a howling wind and a choppy sea, headed north into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The *Maid of the North* was a sturdy boat, and though she pitched and tossed in a way that disarranged the mechanism of her passengers, she did nothing to destroy their confidence.

It was the evening of this last day of the voyage, when Pats, feeling the need of companionship in his misery, descended for a final interview with Solomon. Through a dismal part of the steamer he groped his way, until his eyes became accustomed to the gloom. Solomon heard his step and knew him from afar. He whined, pulled hard at his chain, and stood up on his hind legs, waving his front ones in excited welcome.

"There is *somebody* glad to see me, anyway,"

thought Pats, as he sat on an anchor bar with the dog's head between his knees. There had always been more or less conversation between these two: not that Solomon understood the exact meaning of all the words, but he did thoroughly understand that trust and affection formed the bulk of the sentiments expressed. And these things being the basis of Solomon's character rendered him a sympathetic and grateful listener. The monologue, address, oration, confidence — or whatever — was delivered in a low tone, accompanied by strokings of the listener's head, taps, friendly pinches, and wandering of fingers about the ears.

"Bad place for a dog, old chap. Lots of motion here, and smells, but 't will soon be over. So cheer up. Any way, you are lots better off than I am. In a single interview I have secured the contempt of an exceptionally fine woman. Yes, your Pats has done well."

He smiled in the darkness, a melancholy smile.

"She probably told everything to the priest, and he has explained to her satisfaction wherein I am a fool, — a malicious, blaspheming, dangerous villain, and a stupendous ass. And he is right. Perhaps, in time, — a long time, — I may

learn that insulting people's religion is n't the shortest road to popularity."

In his abstraction the hand, for an instant, was withdrawn. Solomon protested, and the attentions were resumed. "Keep still, old man, I am not going. And don't get that chain around your legs. But she is a fine girl, Sol: *too* fine, perhaps. Just a little, wee bit too everlastingly high-minded and superior for ordinary dogs like us."

While administering these pearls of wisdom the speaker had become interested in two approaching figures, dimly visible in the obscurity. As they came nearer, he saw that one, the older of the two, a man with gray chin whiskers and a blue jersey, was drunk. This man stopped, and holding the other by the arm exclaimed:

"It's so, damn it! It's so, I tell yer! What's he doin' this minute? He's blind drunk in his cabin. Why, the jag on him would sink a man-o'-war. Oh, he's a daisy cap'n, he is! He's the champion navigator."

"He 'll be all right in the mornin'."

"All right in the mornin'! It 'll be a week! And where 'll *we* be to-morrer mornin'? Where are we — hic — now? God knows, and *he* ain't tellin'."

With a maudlin gesture and a reverberating hiccup, the speaker, following the motion of the boat, pushed his friend against the wall and held him there. "I'll tell yer where we are; we are more 'n fifty miles east of where we think we are. We ain't sighted Anticosti yet. And we ain't goin' to."

The other man laughed, "Oh, shut up, Bart. You are gettin' a jag on yerself."

"Yes, sir! We are fifty miles too far to easterd now, and by to-morrer mornin' it 'll be a hundred miles."

They passed on, the older man still holding forth. "I 've been this cruise a dozen times, but, by God! this is the first time I ever tried to get there by — hic — headin' for Labrador."

They disappeared in the darkness, in the direction of the forecastle, the sound of their footsteps dying away among the other noises of the boat.

Here was food for thought. But, then, the man was exceeding drunk. And his companion, who probably knew him well, paid no attention to his words. However, Pats took a look about the boat when he got on deck. The pilot and second officer were in the wheelhouse, both silent, serious, and attending to their duty. The

watches were all at their posts and the *Maid of the North* was ploughing bravely through the night as if she, at least, had no misgivings. By the time Pats went to bed, an hour later, the drunken sailor was forgotten.

It was a long time before he slept; and the sleep, when it came, was fitful. Perhaps he had brooded too much over his fall from grace. As the night wore on he was not sure, half the time, whether he was dreaming or awake. And so eventful were his slumbers, and so real the events therein, that his dreams and his waking moments became painfully intermingled. As, for instance, when he entered the cathedral. For a moment he stood still, overcome by its vastness and by the size of the congregation. Truly an imposing assemblage! And the great edifice was ablaze with light. A wedding, apparently, for there, before the altar, stood the bride, awaiting the groom.

As Pats sauntered up the nave she turned about and smiled. And, lo! it was Miss Marshall, more beautiful than ever, more stately and more patrician, if possible, than in her travelling dress. For now she was all in white with a long veil — and orange blossoms. She smiled at him and beckoned.

Yes! He was to be the groom! It was for him they waited!

He strove to get ahead. His feet refused to budge. The harder he tried, the tighter he stuck. He opened his mouth to explain, but no sound came forth. Again and again he tried. Again and again he failed. The huge congregation began to murmur and he could hear them whispering, "What a fool!"

Then, from behind him came three men: Billy Townsend, the man with the nose, and the other fellow with the flowers. They walked by him, easily, all in wedding array, and they lined up by the bride. Pats tried to raise his voice and stop it, but in vain. The Pope stepped forward and performed the ceremony, uniting them all in marriage. The four bowed their heads and received a blessing.

And when the happy grooms with their bride came down the main aisle, they gave Pats a look, — a look so triumphant and so contemptuous, that it set his soul afire. He boiled with fury and humiliation. But stir he could not, nor speak. The bride's contempt, and she showed it, was beyond endurance. Gasping with passion, he tried to rush forward and smite

the grooms — to scream — to do anything. But he could only stand — immovable.

Suddenly the music changed. From a stately march it galloped into the air of a comic song that he had always hated. The Pope, as he marched by, stopped in front of him and cursed him for a Protestant. And now, beneath the jewelled tiara, Pats recognized the drunken old sailor with the chin beard.

But in the midst of these curses came tremendous blows against the outer walls, resounding through the whole interior of the Cathedral; then an awful voice, as from The Almighty, reverberated down the aisle:

"Time to get up! We are there!"

The martyr, in the violence of his struggle, banged his head against the berth above, and shouted:

"Where?"

"At Boyd's Island, sir, where you get off."

V

WONDERLAND

WHEN Pats, in the early morning light, stepped out upon the deck, he found, enveloping all things, a thick, yellow fog. Miss Marshall, her maid, and Father Burke stood peering over the starboard rail at an approaching life-boat. This boat had been ashore with baggage, and was now returning for the passengers.

The fog lifted at intervals, allowing fugitive glimpses of a wooded promontory not a quarter of a mile away.

Pats was struck afresh this morning by Miss Marshall's appearance. She wore a light gray dress and a hat with an impressive bunch of black, and he saw, with sorrowing eyes, that she and all that pertained to her had become more distantly patrician, more generally exalted

and unattainable, if possible, than heretofore. He knew little of women's dress, but in the style and cut of this particular gown there existed an indefinable something that warned him off. No mortal woman in such attire could fail to realize her own perfection. He also knew that the apparent simplicity of the hat and gown were delusive.

And this woman was so accustomed to the adoration of men that it only annoyed her! Verily, if there was a gulf between them yesterday, to-day it had become a shoreless ocean!

Moreover, he thought he detected in Father Burke's face, as they shook hands at parting, a look of triumph imperfectly suppressed. While causing a mild chagrin, it brought no surprise, as the lady's manner this morning, although civil, was of a temperature to put the chill of death upon presumptuous hope.

After a formal good-by to the uncle, Pats climbed into the little boat and assisted the lady to a seat in the stern. Then he turned about and held forth his hands toward the maid. She stepped back and shook her head.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "There is no danger."

"But I am not going ashore, sir."

He looked toward Miss Marshall, who explained: "Louise is not coming with us. She goes on to Quebec, where I am to meet her in a fortnight."

So they pushed away and rowed off into the fog, waving adieus to the little group that watched them from the *Maid of the North*. Both kept their eyes upon the steamer until a veil of gauze, ethereal but opaque, closed in between them. The sun, still near the horizon, lit up the mist with a golden light, and Pats with the haughty lady seemed floating away into enchanted space.

Nearing the shore they made out more clearly the coast ahead. This fragment of primeval forest, its rocky sides rising fifty feet or thereabouts above the water, was crowned with gigantic pines, their tops, above the mist, all glowing in the morning light. The two passengers regarded this scene in silence, impressed by its savage beauty. The little pier at which they landed, neglected and unsubstantial, seemed barely strong enough to bear their weight.

"Is this the only landing-place?" Pats demanded of the boatswain.

"No, sir. There's another one farther in, but the tide isn't right for it."

Just off the pier stood their trunks, and beside them two boxes and a barrel. Of the three passengers, the gladdest to get ashore, if one could judge by outward manifestations, was Solomon. He ran and barked and wheeled about, jumping against his master as if to impart some of his own enthusiasm. His joy, while less contagious than he himself desired, produced one good result in causing the lady to unbend a little. At first she merely watched him with amusement, then talked and played with him, but not freely and with abandon, only so far as was proper with a dog whose master had become a suspicious character. As the life-boat disappeared toward the invisible steamer, Pats turned to his companion.

"Welcome to this island, Miss Marshall. I am now the host — and your humble and obedient vassal. Shall I hurry on ahead and send down for the baggage? Or shall we go on together and surprise the family?"

Her lips parted to say: "Let us go on together," but she remembered Father Burke and his warning. So she answered, with a glance at the trunks, "Perhaps you should go first. The sooner the baggage is removed the better."

With a little bow of acquiescence Pats turned and climbed the rocky path. She followed, but at a distance, and slowly, that there might be no confusion in his mind as to her desire to walk alone. To make doubly sure she paused about half-way up and listened for a moment to the tumbling of the waves upon the little beach below.

Reaching the top of this path she found herself at the edge of a forest. It was more like a grove, — a vast grove of primeval pines. Into the shadow of this wood she entered, then stopped, and gazed about. Such trees she had never seen, — an endless vista of gigantic trunks, like the columns of a mighty cathedral, all towering to a vault of green, far above her head. And this effect of an interior — of some boundless temple — was augmented by the smooth, brown floor, — a carpet of pine-needles. With upturned face and half-closed eyes the girl drew a long deep breath. The fragrance of the pines, the sighing of the wind through the canopy above, all were soothing to the senses; and yet, in a dreamy way, they stirred the imagination. This was fairy land — the enchanted forest — the land of poetry and peace — of calm content, far away from common things. And that un-

ending lullaby from above! What music could be sweeter?

From this revery — of longer duration than she realized — she was awakened by a distant voice of a person shouting. She could see Pats off at the end of the point waving his handkerchief and trying to attract the attention of somebody on the water. Perhaps the gardener, or some fisherman.

Walking farther on, into the wood, she became more and more impressed by the solemn beauty of this paradise. And the carpet of pine-needles seemed placed there with kind intent as if to insure a deeper silence. She resolved to spend much of her time in these woods, and, even now, she found herself almost regretting the proximity of her friends.

In the distance, between the trunks of the trees, came glimpses, first of Solomon, then of his master, moving hastily about as if on urgent business. She smiled, a superior, tolerant smile at the inconsistency — and the sacrilege — of haste or of any kind of business in the sacred twilight of this grove, this realm of peace. And so, she strolled about, resting at intervals, inhaling the odors of the pines, and dreaming dreams.

In these reveries came no thoughts of time until she saw the enemy — Pats — approaching. His silent footsteps on the smooth, brown carpet made him seem but a spirit of the wood, — some unsubstantial denizen of this enchanted region. But in his face and manner there was something that dispelled all dreams. He stopped before her, out of breath. "There is no house here!"

With a frown of dismay she took a backward step. Indicating by a gesture the cottage out upon the point, she said:

"The house we saw from the boat; what is that?"

"I cannot imagine. But it is no gardener's cottage."

"Then what is it?"

"Heaven knows," he answered with a joyless smile. "It looks like a room in a museum, or a bric-à-brac shop."

"But how do you know there is no other house?"

"I have been over the whole point. I climbed that cliff, behind there, and got a view of the country all about. There is not a house in sight."

"Impossible!"

"Nor a settlement of any kind."

"Surely, somebody can give us information."

"So it would seem, but I have hunted in vain for a human being."

"The people you were calling to from the cliff, could n't they tell you something?"

"There were no people there. I was trying to stop the steamer."

She regarded him in fresh alarm. "Do you mean they have landed us out of our way? — at the wrong place?"

He hesitated. "I am not sure. But we can always get the people of this cottage to take us along in their boat. It is still early; only nine o'clock."

As they walked toward the cottage she noticed that he was short of breath and that he seemed tired. But his manner was cheerful, even inspiriting, and while she took care to remember that he was still in disgrace, she felt her own courage reviving under the influence of his livelier spirits. Besides, as they stepped out of the woods into the open space at the southern end of the point, — a space about two acres in extent and covered with grass, — and saw the blue sea on three sides, she found new life in the air that came against her face. In deep

breaths she inhaled this air. Turning her eyes to her left she beheld for the first time the front of the building they had sighted from the steamer. This building, one story high, of rough stone, was nearly sixty feet long by about thirty feet in width.

"What a fascinating cottage!" she exclaimed. "It is almost covered with ivy!"

"Yes, it is picturesque, and I am curious to see the sort of family that lives in such a place."

"Is no one there now?"

"Nobody."

"Nor anywhere near?"

"No. I have looked in every direction — and shouted in every direction. They are probably off in their boat."

As Pats and Elinor approached the building and stood for a moment before the door, a squad of hens and chickens, most of them white, began to gather about. They seemed very trusting and not at all afraid. The guiding spirit of the party — a tall, self-conscious rooster, attired, apparently, in a scarlet cap, a light gray suit with voluminous knickerbockers, and yellow stockings — studied the new-comers, with his head to one side, expressing himself in sarcastic gutturals.

"That fellow," said Pats, "seems to be making side remarks about us, and they are not complimentary."

His companion paid no attention to this speech. She had regretted her enthusiasm over the cottage. Enthusiasm might foster a belief that she was enjoying his society. So she remarked, in a colder tone, "I think you had better knock."

He knocked. They listened in silence. He knocked again. Still no answer. Then he opened the door and entered, she following cautiously. After one swift, comprehensive survey, she turned to him in amazement. He was watching her, expecting this effect.

The interior of the building was practically a single room. From the objects contained it might be the hall of a palace, or of an old château — or of a gallery in some great museum. On the walls hung splendid tapestries and rare old paintings. Beneath them stood Italian cabinets of superb design, a marriage chest, a Louis XV. sofa in gilt, upholstered with Beauvais tapestry, chairs and bergère to match. Scattered about were vases in old Sèvres, clocks in ormolu, miniatures, and the innumerable objects of ancestral and artistic

value pertaining to a noble house. Over all lay the mellowness of age, those harmonies of color that bewitch the antiquary.

Dumfounding it certainly was, the sudden transition from primeval nature without to this sumptuous interior. Conspicuous in the sombre richness of these treasures were two marble busts, standing on either side of the great tapestry fronting the door. They were splendid works of art, larger than life, and represented a lofty individual who might have been a marshal of France with the Grand Condé, and an equally exalted personage, presumably his wife. These impressive ancestors rested on pedestals of Sienna marble.

Elinor Marshall found no words to express her amazement. She stood in silence, her eyes, in a sort of bewilderment, moving rapidly about the room. At last in a low, awe-struck voice she said:

"Have you no idea what it all means?"

"None whatever. But I am sure of one thing, that it has nothing to do with Boyd's Island. If such a house as this were anywhere within reach of my sisters, they surely would have mentioned it."

"Oh, surely!"

"It being off here in the wilderness is what takes one's breath away."

"I can't understand it — or even quite believe it yet." Then forgetting herself for an instant, she added, impulsively: "Why, just now I closed my eyes and was surprised, when I opened them again, to find it still here."

"Yes; I expect an old woman with a hook nose to wave a stick and have the whole thing vanish."

As their eyes met she almost smiled. For this lapse of duty to her church and to herself, however, she atoned at once by a sudden frigidity. Turning away she studied a huge tapestry that hung on their left as they entered. This tapestry extended almost across the room, forming a screen to a chamber behind.

"That is a bed-room," said Pats. "I looked in," and he drew aside the tapestry that she might enter. She shook her head and stepped back. But in spite of her respect for the owner's privacy, and before she could avert her eyes, she caught a hasty glimpse of a monumental bed with hangings of faded silk between its massive columns; of two portraits on the walls and an ivory crucifix. This glance at the bed-room served to increase her uneasiness. Mov-

ing toward a table that stood near the centre of the room she turned, and regarding Pats with the lofty, far-away air which never failed to congeal his courage, she asked:

"Where do you think we are? How far from your house?"

"I have not the remotest idea. It is hard to guess. But I have a suspicion —"

He hesitated. "Suppose I go out and make another effort to find these people." And he started for the door.

"What is your suspicion?"

He stopped in obvious uncertainty as to his reply. Looking away through the open door, he said: "Oh, nothing — except that we are not where we want to be."

"Well, what else?"

Pats met her glance and saw that she was becoming distrustful. Standing with one hand upon the ancient table, with the tapestries and busts behind her, she was a striking figure, and in perfect harmony with the surrounding magnificence. She reminded him of some picture of an angry queen at bay — confronting her enemies. In her eyes and in her manner he clearly read that she had resolved to know the the truth. Moreover, she gave at this moment

a distinct impression of being a person of considerable spirit. So, to allay her suspicions, which he could only guess at, he related, after the briefest hesitation, all he had heard the night before between the two sailors, repeating, as nearly as possible, what the drunken man had said. When he had finished she replied, calmly, but evidently repressing her indignation :

" Why did you not tell me this earlier? — on the boat, before it was too late? "

" I did not suppose you would care to know. I attached very little importance to it."

" Importance ! I think I might have had some choice as to being landed in the wilderness with you alone, or going on to your sisters."

Pats regarded her in a mild surprise. Her sudden anger was very real. He answered, gently : " The man was so drunk he hardly knew what he was saying. His companion, who probably knew him well, paid no attention to his words."

" But *I* should have paid attention to his words. And so would my uncle, or any friend of mine, if he could have heard him."

Pats, taken aback at the new light in which he stood, retorted, with some feeling :

"I hope you don't mean to say that I did this intentionally?"

"Then why did you keep such information so carefully to yourself?"

"Because when I woke up I found we were here — that is, as I supposed — at Boyd's Island. Both the steward and the first officer told me so. My only doubt when I went to bed was about our getting here. And this morning here we were. It had come out all right, so far as I knew."

With a curl of her lip that expressed a world of incredulity, she dropped into one of the chairs behind the table, and rested her chin upon her hand.

In a lower tone, he continued:

"I have never been here before, and had no idea how it looked. Why didn't Father Burke tell you this was not the place? He knows our island."

"It was foggy. Nobody could see it; and he knew nothing of the warning you were keeping to yourself."

Beneath this avalanche of contempt, Pats's feeble knees almost let him to the floor.

"Miss Marshall, at least do me the justice to believe —"

"Would you mind leaving me for a time?"

Into his hollow cheeks came a darker color, and he closed his eyes. Then, with a glance of resentment, he took a step or two in her direction as if to speak. But instead of speaking, he turned toward the open door and walked slowly out.

For a long time she remained in the same position, boiling with resentment, yet keeping back her tears. She knew this coast was wild, almost uninhabited, neither to the east nor west a sign of life: behind them, northward, the unending forest. And the owner of this mysterious habitation, — what manner of man was he? Perhaps there were several. And she, a woman, alone with these men! From such bitter reflections she was recalled, slowly, by the realization that her eyes were resting upon a little portrait about twice the size of an ordinary miniature — a woman's face — confronting her from across the table. It hung against the back of the opposite chair, on a level with her own eyes, and was suspended by a narrow black ribbon, — an odd place for a portrait, but in glancing at the table in front of her she thought she guessed the reason. Before the place in which she had thrown herself she

noticed for the first time a plate, a pewter mug, a napkin, and a knife and fork. Evidently the host expected to eat alone, for there were no other dishes on the table. And the portrait, of course, must be his wife, or his mother, perhaps, or daughter. It proved a pleasant face as it, in turn, regarded her from the little oval frame, — rather plump and youthful, with a curious little mouth and large dark eyes, with a peculiar droop at the outer corners. The hair was drawn up, away from the forehead; the shoulders were bare, and a string of pearls encircled the neck. She was dark, with good features, not strictly beautiful, but gentle and somewhat melancholy, in spite of the mirthful eyes.

So this was the romance of their mysterious host! She of the miniature, whatever her title — wife, mother, daughter, or sweetheart, — was ever present at his table, looking into his eyes across the board.

The American girl felt a quickening interest in this host. Was it love that drove him to the wilderness? And why did he bring into it such a wealth of household gods?

As she leaned back in the old-fashioned chair, her eyes wandering over the various objects in this unaccountable abode, her imagination began

to play, giving a life and history to the people in the tapestries and portraits. The outside world was almost forgotten when she was recalled to herself by the chimes of an enormous clock behind the door. This triumph of a previous century, after tolling twelve, rambled off with a music-box accompaniment into the quaint old minuet attributed to Louis XIII. Before it had finished, two other clocks began their midday strike.

Elinor looked about in alarm, under a vague impression that the various objects in the room were coming to life. Then, with the reaction, she smiled and thought:

"Our friend is methodical with his clocks."

But still, in this atmosphere, she was not at ease; there was an excess of mystery, too much that needed explanation. And now that it was midday, the host might return at any moment and find her there, alone. So she went out; and to avoid any appearance of pursuing Mr. Boyd, she followed a little path behind the house that led among the pines. Hardly had she entered the wood, however, when she saw, off to her right and not many yards away, the man she was trying to escape. He was lying at full length along the ground, one arm for a

pillow, his face against the pine-needles. In this prostrate figure every line bore witness to a measureless despair.

In her one glance she had seen that Solomon, as he sat by his master's head, was following her with his eyes. And these eyes seemed to say: "We stand or fall together, he and I. So go about your business."

She also saw that a warning from the watcher had aroused the downcast figure; for it raised its head and looked about. Mortified and angry with herself, and still angrier with him, she averted her eyes and passed coldly on; but with the consolation of having witnessed some indication of his own misery and repentance. However, it was an empty joy. Of what avail his remorse? The evil was done; her good name was forever compromised.

Preoccupied with these thoughts, she halted suddenly, and with a shock. At her feet, across the little path she had unconsciously followed, stretched an open grave. It was not a fresh excavation, for on the bottom lay a covering of pine-needles. And the rough pile of earth alongside was also covered with them. Projecting into the grave were several roots, feeders sent out by the great trees above; and from the stumps of other

and larger roots it was evident that he who dug the grave had been driven to use the axe as well as the shovel. Close beside this grave was a mound with a wooden cross at the head.

"There," she thought, "rests the lady of the miniature — perhaps." This mound was also covered with pine-needles, as if Nature were helping some one to forget.

The silence of this spot, the murmuring of the wind among the branches high above, all tended to a somewhat mournful revery; and she wondered how this empty grave had been cheated of its tenant. With reverence she gazed upon the primitive wooden cross, evidently put together by inexperienced hands. Then she looked upward, as if to question the voices in the boughs above. But of the empty grave and its companion the whispering pines told nothing.

Approaching footsteps gave no sound in this forest, and she was startled by a cough behind her. It was only Pats, not wishing to startle her by a sudden presence. His face seemed flushed, and even thinner than before; and about his mouth had come a drawn and sensitive look. But her eyes rested coldly upon him as they would rest upon any repugnant object that she despised, but did not fear.

Smiling with an effort, he said: "Excuse my following you, but it is nearly one o'clock and time for food. I am sure we can find something in that cottage."

"I am not hungry."

"Did you have breakfast on the boat?"

"No."

"Then you *must* be hungry."

"I do not care to eat." And she turned away.

"Excuse me, Miss Marshall," and he spoke more seriously, "pardon my giving you advice, but you have had a hard morning and you will feel better, later on, for a little food. As for me, I have had nothing since yesterday, and shall collapse without it. Suppose I go to the house and scrape up some sort of a lunch. Won't you come there in a few minutes?"

Her eyes travelled frigidly from his face to his feet. But before she could reply, he added:

"Besides, the owner may come back, now, at any minute, and if he finds us together it will save time in our getting off."

Turning away to resume her walk she answered, indifferently: "Very well, I will be there soon."

VI

THE SECRET OF THE PINES

AT one o'clock the lunch was served.

Pats had placed before the lady a portion of a ham, a plate of crackers, some marmalade, and a bottle of claret.

"There are provisions in the cellar," he said, "to last a year: sacks of flour, dried apples, preserved fruits, potatoes, all sorts of canned things, and claret by the dozen."

As he spoke, he laid his hand upon the back of the chair that held the miniature, — the seat opposite her own.

"Don't sit there!" she exclaimed. "We must respect the customs of the house."

"Of course!" and he drew up another seat.

Food and a little wine tended to freshen the spirits of both travellers. Pats especially acquired new life and strength. The arrival of

a glass or two of claret in his yearning stomach revived his hopes and loosened his tongue. Noticing that her eyes were constantly returning to the little portrait that faced her, he said, at last:

"By the way, there is something in the cellar that may throw some light on this lady, or on that empty grave back there." And he nodded toward the pines.

"What is that?"

"A coffin."

He smiled at her surprise and horror. In a low voice, she murmured:

"It is empty, of course!"

"Yes, I raised the lid."

"What can it mean?"

"I have no idea, unless some one disappointed somebody else by remaining alive, when he — or she — ought to be dead. That sometimes happens."

"It is very mysterious," and she looked into the eyes of the miniature as if for enlightenment.

"Very, indeed; but on the other hand, certain things are pretty evident. Such as the character of our host, and various points in his career."

"You mean that he is a hermit with a history?"

"Yes, and more specific than that!" Then-

turning about in his chair and surveying the room: "He is an aristocrat, to begin with. These works of art are ancestral. They are no amateur's collection. Moreover, he left France because he had to. A man of his position does not bring his treasures into the wilderness for the fun of it. And when he settled here he had no intention of being hunted up by his friends — or by his enemies."

Elinor, with averted eyes, listened politely, but with no encouraging display of interest.

"But let us be sure he is not within hearing," Pats added, and he stepped to the door and looked about. "Not a sail in sight."

At this point Solomon renewed his efforts to get his master to follow him, but in vain.

"Why don't you go with him?" said Elinor. "He may have made an important discovery, like the graves, perhaps."

"More likely a woodchuck's hole, or a squirrel track. Besides," he added, with a smile, as he dropped into his chair again, "these broomsticks of mine have collapsed once to-day, and I am becoming cautious. It has been a lively morning — for a convalescent."

With a look that was almost, but not quite, sympathetic, she replied: "You have done too

much. Stay here and rest. I will go with him, just for curiosity."

She went out, preceded by the bounding Solomon. Through the open door Pats watched them, and into his face came a graver look as he followed, with his eyes, the graceful figure in the gray dress until it disappeared from the sunlight among the shadows of the forest.

That he and she were stranded at a point far away from his own home he had little doubt. No such extraordinary house as this could have existed within fifty miles of Boyd's Island without his hearing of it. Moreover, he keenly regretted on her account his own physical condition. Since rising from his bed of fever he had carefully avoided all fatigue, according to his doctor's injunction. But now, after this morning's efforts, his legs were weak and his head was flighty. Things showed a tendency to dance before his eyes in a way that he had not experienced heretofore. When he lay upon the ground an hour ago he did it, among other reasons, to avoid tumbling from dizziness and exhaustion.

The lady's situation was bad enough already. To have a collapsible man upon her hands was a supreme and final calamity that he wished to spare her. He leaned back in his chair and

rested his feet on the heavy carving beneath the table. How good it was, this relaxation of all one's muscles!

The pompous rooster, with a few favorites of his seraglio, came and stood about the open door, eying him in disapproval, and always muttering.

In looking idly about Pats found himself becoming interested in the huge tapestry extending across the room at his right, — the one that served as a screen to the bedchamber. While no expert in no such matters, he recognized in this tapestry a splendid work of art, both from its color and wealth of detail, and from the quality of its material. The more he studied it, the deeper became his interest — and his amusement. The scene, a formal Italian garden of the sixteenth century, of vast dimensions, showed fountains and statues without limit, and trees trimmed in fantastic shapes, with a château in the background. But the central group of figures brought a smile to his face. For, while the gardens were filled with lords and ladies of the court of Henri III., those in the foreground being nearly the size of life, — all clad in their richest attire, feathers in their hats, high ruffs about the neck, and resplendent with jewels, the ladies in stiff bodices and voluminous skirts,

— there were two figures in the centre in startling contrast with their overdressed companions. These two, a man and a woman, wore nothing except a garland of leaves about the hips.

Pats smiled and even forgot his fatigue, as he realized that he was gazing upon a serious conception of the Garden of Eden. And the bride and groom showed no embarrassment. The groom was pointing, in an easy manner, to anything, anywhere, while the bride, in a graceful but self-conscious pose, ignored his remarks.

And all the lords and ladies round about accepted, as a matter of course, the nakedness of this unconventional pair. While still fascinated by the brazen indifference of this famous couple, and pleasantly shocked by their disregard for all the rules of propriety, he was aroused by the sudden appearance in the doorway of Elinor Marshall. She had evidently been hurrying. There was excitement in her voice, as she exclaimed:

"He is here! He has come back!"

"The owner?"

"Yes, he is taking a nap on a bench, on the other side of the point."

In another moment Pats was beside her, both walking rapidly through the wood. Approach-

ing the western edge of the point, they saw, between the trees, a figure sitting upon a bench, overlooking the water, his back toward them. With one elbow upon an arm of the rustic seat, his cheek resting on his hand and his knees crossed, he seemed in full enjoyment of a nap.

Pats took a position in front of the sleeper, at a respectful distance, then said, in a voice not too loud:

"I beg your pardon, sir."

There was no responsive movement. When it became clear that he had not been heard, Pats stepped a very little nearer and repeated, in a louder tone:

"I beg your pardon, sir."

Still the sleeper slept.

Pats glanced at Elinor Marshall, who smiled, involuntarily. Pats also smiled, as he realized that this ceremonious and somewhat labored greeting had a distinctly comic side, especially when so completely thrown away. However, he was about to repeat the salutation and in a louder voice, when he was struck by the color of the hand against the cheek. He went nearer and, stooping down, looked up into the sleeper's face. A glance was enough.

Slowly he straightened up, then reverently removed his hat.

Elinor, with a look of awe, came nearer and whispered:

"Dead! Is it possible!"

For a moment both stood in silence, looking down upon the seated figure. It was that of an elderly man, short, and slight of frame, with thick gray hair, and a beard cut roughly to a point. The face, brown, thin, and bony, was unduly emphasized by a Roman nose, too large for the other features. But the face, as a whole, impressed the two people now regarding it as almost handsome. He was clad in a dark gray suit, and a soft felt hat lay upon the seat beside him.

"How long has he been here, do you think?" asked Elinor, in a low voice.

"A day or two, I should say. His clothes are a little damp, and there are pine-needles on his shoulders and on his head."

"But how dreadfully sudden it must have come! Not a change in his position, or in his expression, even."

"An ideal death," said Pats. "I have helped bury a good many men this year, both friends and enemies, but very few went off as comfortably as this."

He took out his watch, seemed to hesitate a moment, then said, reluctantly :

" This is bad for us, you know, finding him dead this way."

" Why ? "

" It means there is no boat to get away with."

A look of alarm came into her face.

" We may as well face the situation," he continued, looking off over the water. " This man lived here alone, as we know from what we have seen in his house. And he evidently selected this place, not wishing to be disturbed. We are at the end of a bay at least ten miles deep, with no settlement in sight. There is nothing whatever to bring a visitor in here. The traffic of the gulf is away out there, perhaps thirty miles from here."

She made no reply. Venturing to glance at her face, he saw there were no signs of anger, only a look of anxiety.

" I will tell you just what I think, Miss Marshall, and you can act accordingly. I shall, of course, do whatever you wish. But, as nearly as I can judge, we are prisoners until we can get away by tramping through the wilderness."

He indicated, with a gesture, the broad current at their feet, washing the western edge of

the point. "That river we can never cross without a boat, or a raft; and in that direction — I don't know how many miles away — is Boyd's Island. In the other direction, to the east, there is nothing but wilderness for an indefinite distance. That is, I think so. Now, if you prefer, I will go up this bank of the river at once, tie some logs together and try for a passage; then push on as fast as possible for our place, or the nearest settlement, and come back for you. Or, I will stay until we can go on together. Whatever you decide shall be done."

He had spoken rapidly, and was ill at ease, watching her earnestly all the while.

As for her, she was dismayed by his words. She had been listening with a growing terror. Now, she turned away to conceal a tendency to tears. But this was repressed. With no resentment, but with obvious emotion, she inquired:

"Can you get across the river?"

"Very likely."

"If you fail, or if anything happens to you, what becomes of me?"

"You would be here alone, and in a very bad plight. For that reason I think I would better stay until we can start together."

A slight gesture of resignation was her only

reply. There was a pause, uncomfortable for Pats from his consciousness of her low opinion of him. However, he continued, in a somewhat perfunctory way, turning to the silent occupant of the bench.

"Now, as we take possession of this place, the least we can do is to give the owner a decent burial. Fortunately for us a grave is dug and a coffin ready."

"Yes, *his* grave and *his* coffin," and she regarded with a gentler expression the sitting figure. "And I think I know why he dug the grave."

"To save somebody else the trouble?"

"To be sure of resting beside his companion."

"Of course! that explains it all. He knew that strangers might bury him in the easiest place; that they would never chop through all those roots."

He stepped around behind the body, placed his hands under the arms, and made an effort to raise it, but the weight was beyond his strength. Looking toward his companion with an apologetic smile, he said: "I am sorry to be so useless, but — together we can carry him, if you don't mind."

At this suggestion Elinor, with a look of horror, took a backward step.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "for suggesting it. I have been doing so much of this work that I had forgotten how it affected others."

"What work?"

"Burying people. In the Transvaal. One morning, with a squad, I buried twenty-eight. Nine of them my own friends. So, if I go about this in the simplest way, do not think it is from want of sympathy."

"I shall understand."

"Then I will bring that wheelbarrow I saw behind the house."

He started off, then stopped as if to say something, but hesitated.

"What is it, Mr. Boyd?"

"I am afraid that coffin is too heavy for me. Would you mind helping with it?"

"No. And I can help you with the body, too, if necessary." And together they returned to the cottage.

Never, probably, did simpler obsequies befall a peer of France.

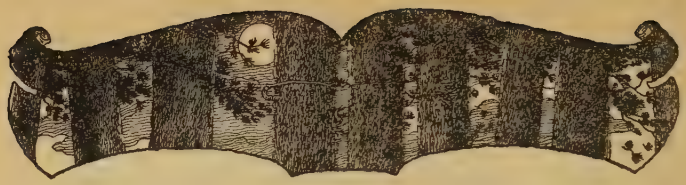
Sitting up in the same position as on the rustic bench, his cheek upon his hand, his elbow on

the side of the barrow, the hermit was wheeled to his final resting-place beneath the pines. Beside him, with a helping hand, walked Elinor Marshall, shocked and saddened by these awful incongruities.

Behind came Solomon.

Among the pines, in the solemn shade of this cathedral, grander and more impressive than any human temple, moved the little procession.

No requiem; only the murmuring in the boughs above, those far-away voices, dearer to him, perhaps, — and to his companion in the grave beside, — than all other music.



VII

THE CLOUDS GATHER

THE supper that evening was late. After the simple repast — of crackers, tongue, and a cup of tea — Pats and Elinor strolled out into the twilight and sat upon a rock. The rock was at the very tip of the point, overlooking the water to the south.

On the right, off to the west, the land showed merely as a purple strip in the fading light, stretching out into the gulf a dozen miles or more. Behind it the sinking sun had left a bar of crimson light. To the east lay another headland running, like its neighbor, many miles to the south. These two coasts formed a vast bay, at whose northern extremity lay the little point at which Miss Elinor Marshall and Mr. Patrick Boyd had been landed by the *Maid of the North*. In the gathering gloom this prospect,

with the towering forest that lay behind, was impressive — and solemn. And the solemnity of the scene was intensified by the primeval solitude, — the absence of all sign of human life.

Both travellers were silent, thoughtful, and very tired. It had been a long day, and then the misunderstanding in the middle of it had told considerably upon the nerves of both. To Pats the most exhausting experience of all had been the business of the baggage, — its transportation from the beach below to the house above. Elinor's trunk, being far too heavy for their own four hands, Pats had suggested carrying the trays up separately; and this was done. Certain things from his own trunk he had lugged off into the woods, where, as he said:

"There 's a little outbuilding that will do for me. Not a royal museum like this of yours, but good accommodations for a bachelor."

She did not inquire as to particulars. The gentleman's bed-chamber was not a subject on which she cared to encourage confidences.

Her fatigue had merely created a wholesome desire for rest, — the sleepiness and indifference that come from weary muscles. But Pats's exhaustion was of a different sort. All the

strength of his body had departed. Every muscle, cord, and sinew was unstrung. His spine seemed on the point of folding up. A hollow, nervous feeling had settled in the back of his head, and being something new it caused him a mild uneasiness. Moreover, his hands and feet were cold. Dispiriting chills travelled up and down his back at intervals. This might be owing to the change in temperature, as a storm was evidently brewing.

The wind from the northwest had grown several degrees colder since the sun went down, and the heavens were sombre. There was not a star in sight. A yearning to close his eyes and go to sleep came over him, but he remembered how offensive was his presence to this lady, even at his best behavior. He must take no liberties; so he remarked, cheerfully, in a tone indicative of suppressed exuberance of spirit:

"I hope you will not feel nervous in your château to-night."

"No, I think not. It is a weird place to sleep in, however."

"Yes, it is. Would n't you like me to sleep just outside, near the door? I am used to camping out, you know."

"No, I thank you. I shall get along very well, I have no doubt."

After that a prolonged silence. At last the lady arose.

"I think I shall go in, Mr. Boyd. I find I am very tired."

While they were groping about the cottage for a lamp, Elinor remembered two candelabra that stood upon a cabinet, stately works of art in bronze and gilt, very heavy, with five candles to each. One of them was taken down.

"Don't light them all," said Elinor. "We must not be extravagant."

But Pats did light them all, saying: "This is a special occasion, and you are the guest of honor."

The guest of honor looked around this ever-surprising interior and experienced a peculiar sense of fear. She kept it to herself, however; but as her eyes moved swiftly from the life-sized figures in the tapestry to the sharply defined busts, and then to the canvas faces, the whole room seemed alive with people.

"Plenty of company here," said Pats, reading her expression. "But in your chamber, there, you will have fewer companions, only the host and his wife." Then, with a smile, "Excuse

my suggesting it, if an impertinence, but if you would like to have me take a look under that monumental bed I shall be most happy to do it."

She hesitated, yet she knew she would do it herself, after he had gone. While she was hesitating, Pats drew aside the tapestry and passed with the candelabrum into the chamber. He made a careful survey of the territory beneath the bed and reported it free of robbers. Solomon, also, was investigating; and Pats, who was doing this solely for Elinor's peace of mind, knew well that if a human being were anywhere about the dog would long ago have announced him. But they made a tour of the room, looking behind and under the larger objects, lifting the lids of the marriage chests and opening the doors of the cupboard. Into the cellar, too, they descended, and made a careful search. The five candles produced a weird effect in their promenade along this subterraneous apartment, lighting up an astonishing medley of furniture, garden implements, empty bottles, the posts and side pieces of an extra bed, a broken statue, another wheelbarrow, a lot of kindling wood, and the empty corner where the coffin had awaited its mission. There seemed to be everything except the man they were looking for.

"Fearfully cold down here!" Pats's teeth chattered as he spoke, and he shivered from crown to heel.

"Cold! It does n't seem so to me," and her tone suggested a somewhat contemptuous surprise.

"To me it is like the chill of death." The candles shook in his hand as he spoke.

"Perhaps you have taken cold," and with stately indifference she moved on toward the stairs.

"Proximity of a Boston iceberg more likely." But this was not spoken aloud.

Upstairs, when about to take his departure, Pats was still shivering. As he stood for a moment before the embers in the big open fireplace at the end of the cottage, his eyes rested upon a chest near by, with a rug and a cushion on the top, evidently used as a lounge by the owner. After hesitating a moment, he asked:

"Would you object to my occupying the top of that chest, just for to-night?"

As she turned toward him he detected a straightening of the figure and the now familiar loftiness of manner which he knew to be unfailing signs of anger — or contempt. Possibly both.

"Certainly not. If you have a cold, it is better you should remain near the fire. I have no objections to sleeping in that other house. You say there *is* another house."

"Oh, yes! There is another house," he hastened to explain. "And it's plenty good enough. Of course I shall go there. I beg your pardon for suggesting anything else. I forgot my resolve. I did n't realize what I was doing."

"I prefer going there myself," she said, rapidly. "I *much* prefer it."

And she turned toward the chamber to make arrangements for departure. But Pats stepped forward and said, decisively, and in a tone that surprised her:

"You stay here. I go to the other house myself."

He took his hat, and with Solomon at his heels strode rapidly to the door. There he stopped, and with his hand on the latch said, more gently, in his usual manner:

"Would n't you like Solomon to stay here with you? He is lots of company, and a protector."

She made no reply, but looked with glacial indifference from the man to his dog.

"You would feel less lonesome, I know." Patting Solomon on the head and pointing to the haughty figure, "You stay here, old man. That's all right. I'll see you in the morning."

The dog clearly preferred going with his master, but Pats, with a pleasant good-night to the lady, stepped out into the darkness and closed the door behind him.

Solomon, with his nose to the door, stood for several moments in silent protest against this desertion. Later, however, he followed Elinor into the bed-chamber, and although his presence gave her courage and was distinctly a solace, she remained vaguely apprehensive and too ill at ease to undress and go to bed; so, instead, she lay on the outside of it, in a wrapper.

Without, the northeast wind had become a gale. The howling of the storm, together with the ghostly silence of the many-peopled room excited her imagination and quickened her fears.

But weariness and perfect physical relaxation overcame exhausted nerves, and at last the lady slept

VIII

"WOMEN ARE DEVILS"

SO sound was Elinor Marshall's sleep that when she awoke the old clock behind the door was celebrating, with its usual music, the hour of nine. From the fury of the rain upon the roof and the sheets of water coursing down the little panes of the window in her chamber, it seemed as if a deluge had arrived. And upon opening the front door she stepped hastily back to avoid the water from the roof and the spattering from the doorstep. But Solomon was not afraid. He darted out into the rain and disappeared among the pines.

"Mr. Boyd will surely get a soaking when he comes for his breakfast," she thought. And she wondered, casually, if he had a waterproof or an umbrella. He would soon appear, probably, and, as men were always hungry, she

turned her attention to hunting up food and coffee for a breakfast. These were easily found. Having started a fire and set the table for two, she got the coffee under way. Crackers, boiled eggs, sardines, marmalade, cold ham, and apples were to appear at this repast.

But at ten o'clock Mr. Boyd had not appeared. At half-past ten she realized the folly of waiting indefinitely for a man who preferred his bed to his breakfast, and she sat down alone. In the midst of her meal, however, she heard Solomon scratching at the door. No sooner had he entered — dripping with rain — than he began the same pantomime of entreaty as that of yesterday when he tried to get somebody to follow him. Now, perhaps his master was in trouble.

But Elinor remembered what Mr. Boyd himself had said, "He has probably found a woodchuck or a squirrel track."

Looking out into the driving rain she decided to take the benefit of the doubt. But Solomon was persistent; so aggressively persistent that in the end he became convincing. At last she put on her waterproof and plunged forth into the tempest, the overjoyed dog capering wildly in front. Straight into the woods he led her.

Only a short distance had they travelled among the pines when she stopped, with a new fear, at the sound of voices. Two men, she thought, were quarrelling. Then a moment later, she heard the fragment of a song. After listening more attentively she decided that the voice of Mr. Boyd was the only one she heard. But was he intoxicated? All she caught was a senseless, almost incoherent flow of language, with laughable attempts at singing. At this, Elinor was on the point of turning back, prompted both by terror and disgust, when Solomon, with increasing vehemence, renewed his exhortations. She yielded, and a few steps farther the sight of Pats lying upon the ground at the foot of a gigantic pine, his valise beside him, its contents, now soaked with rain and scattered about, brought a twinge of remorse.

So he had done this rather than oppose her ideas of propriety! And yesterday, when he spoke of another house, she, in her heart, had not believed him.

All scruples regarding intoxication were dismissed. She hastened forward and knelt beside him. Pats, with feverish face, lay on his back in wild delirium. The pine-needles that formed his bed were soggy with rain, and his clothing

was soaked. She laid her hand against his face and found it hot. His eyes met hers with no sign of recognition.

"That's all right," he muttered, rolling his head from side to side, "nobody denies it. Run your own business; but I want my clothes. Damn it, I'm freezing!"

His teeth chattered and he shook his fist in an invisible face. Involuntarily, from a sense of helplessness, she looked vaguely about as if seeking aid.

Here, in the woods, was protection from the wind, but the branches aloft were moving and tossing from the fury of the gale above. The usual murmuring of the pines had become a roar. Great drops of rain, shaken from this surging vault, fell in fitful but copious showers. This constant roar, — not unlike the ocean in a gale, — the sombre light, the helpless and perhaps dying man before her, the chill and mortal dampness of all and everything around, for an instant congealed her courage and took away her strength. But this she fought against. All her powers of persuasion, and all her strength, she employed to get him on his feet. Pats, although wild in speech and reckless in gesture, was docile and willing to obey. The weakness of his own legs,

however, threatened to bring his rescuer and himself to the ground. And, all the time, a constant flow of crazy speech and foolish, feeble song.

Half-way to the cottage he stopped, wrenched his arm from her grasp and demanded, with a frown: "I say; you expect decent things of a woman, don't you?"

"Yes, of course." And she nodded assent, trying to lead him on again. But he pushed her away and would have fallen with the effort had she not caught him in time.

"Well, there's this about it," he continued, trying feebly to shake his arm from her hands yet staggering along where she led, "I'm not stuck on that woman or any other. I'm not in that line of business. Do I look like a one-eyed ass?"

"No, no, not at all!" And, gently, she urged him forward.

"Because three or four fools are gone over her, she thinks everybody else — oh! who cares, anyway? Let her think!"

It was a zigzag journey. He reeled and plunged, dragging her in all directions; and so yielding were his knees that she doubted if they could bear him to the house. Once, when seemingly on the point of a collapse, he muttered,

in a confidential tone: "This hauling guns under a frying sun does give you a thirst, hey? Say, am I right, or not?"

"Yes, yes, you are right. Come along: just a little farther."

"Did you ever swim in champagne with your mouth open?"

"No."

"What a fool!"

Then he stopped, straightened up and sang, in a die-away, broken voice, with chattering teeth:

"See the Britons, Bloody Britons,
Millions of 'em doncherknow,
All a swarming up the kopje —
Just to turn about an hopje!
O, where in hell to go!
Bloody Britons!"

Grasping her roughly by the shoulder, he exclaimed: "Why don't you join in the chorus, you blithering idiot?"

This song, in fragments and with variations, he sang — or rather tried to sing — repeatedly. At the edge of the woods he seemed to shrink from the fury of the storm which drove, in cutting blasts, against their faces. And on the threshold of the cottage he again held back.

In the doorway, leaning against the jamb, he said, solemnly:

"Look here, young feller, just mark my words, women are devils. The less you have to do with them the better for you. D—n the whole tribe! That's what I say!"

But she dragged him in and supported him to a chair before the fire. He sat shivering with cold, his chin upon his breast, apparently exhausted by the walk. The water dripping from his saturated garments formed puddles on the floor.

Elinor, for a moment, stood regarding him in heart-stricken silence. Once more she felt of his clothes, then, after an inward struggle, she made a resolve. As she did it the color came into her cheeks.

IX

A SINNER'S RECOMPENSE

AFTER a lapse of time — an unremembered period of whose length he had no conception — Pats awoke.

Was it a little temple of carved wood in which he lay? At each corner stood a column; above him a little dome of silk, ancient and much faded. Gradually — and slowly — he realized that he was reposing on a bed of vast dimensions and in a room whose furnishings belonged to a previous century. A mellow, golden light pervaded the apartment. This light, which gave to all things in the room an air of unreality — as in an ancient painting luminous with age — came from the sunshine entering through a piece of antiquated silk, placed by considerate hands against the window.

Pats's wandering eyes encountered a lady in a chair. She sat facing him, a few feet away, her

head resting easily against the carved woodwork behind, a hand upon each arm of the seat. She was asleep. In this golden mist she seemed to the half-dreaming man a vision from another world — something too good to be true — a divine presence that might vanish if he moved. Or, perhaps, she might fade back into a frame and prove to be only another of the portraits that hung about the room. So far as he could judge, with his slowly awakening senses, he was gazing upon the most entrancing face he had ever beheld. At first the face was unfamiliar, but soon, with returning memory, he recalled it. But it seemed thinner now. There were dark lines beneath the eyes, and something about the mouth gave an impression of weariness and care; and these were not in the face as he had known it. However, the closed lids, and the head resting calmly against the back of the high chair made a tranquil picture. For a long time he lay immovable, his eyes drinking in the vision. There was nothing to disturb the silence save the solemn ticking of a clock in another part of the cottage. He heard, beyond the big tapestry, the sound of a dog snapping at a fly. Pats smiled and would have whistled to Solomon, but he remembered the weary angel by his bed. With a sort

or terror he recalled this lady's capacity for contempt.

Being too warm for comfort he pushed, with exceeding gentleness and caution, the bed-clothes farther from his chin. But the movement, although absolutely noiseless, as he believed, caused the eyes of the sleeper to open. She arose, then stood beside him. A cool hand was laid gently upon his forehead; another drew up the bed-clothes to his chin, as they were before. With anxious eyes he studied her face, and when he found therein neither contempt nor aversion he experienced an overwhelming joy. And she, detecting in the invalid's eyes an unwonted look, bent over and regarded him more intently. As his eyes looked into hers he smiled, faintly, experimentally, in humble adoration. The face above him lit up with pleasure. In a very low tone she exclaimed:

"You are feeling better!"

He undertook to reply but no voice responded. He tried again, and succeeded in whispering:

"Has anything happened?"

"You have been very ill."

"How long?"

"This is the eighth day."

"The eighth day!" He frowned in a men-

tal effort to unravel the past. "Then I must have been — out of my head."

"Yes, most of the time." She was watching him with anxious eyes. "Perhaps you had better not talk much now. Try and sleep again."

"No, I am — full of sleep. Is this the same house — we discovered that first day?"

"Yes."

He closed his eyes, and again she rested a hand upon his brow.

"Who is here besides you?" he asked.

"No one — except Solomon."

"Solomon!" and he smiled. "Is Solomon well?"

"Oh, yes! Very well."

"Then you have taken care of me all this time?"

She turned away and took up a glass of water from a table near the bed.

"Yes; Solomon and I together. Are you thirsty? Would you like anything?"

Pats closed his eyes and took a long breath. There was no use in trying to say what he felt, so he answered in a husky voice, which he found difficult to control:

"Thank you. I *am* thirsty."

"Would you like tea or a glass of water?"

"Water, please."

"Or, would you prefer grapes?"

"Grapes!"

"Yes, grapes, or oranges, or pears, whichever you prefer."

His look of incredulity seemed to amuse her. "Do you remember the two boxes and the barrel left by the *Maid of the North* on the beach with our baggage?"

He nodded.

"Well, one of those boxes was filled with fruit."

"Is there plenty for both of us?"

"More than enough."

"Then I will have a glass of water first and then grapes — and all the other things."

He drank the water, and as she took away the empty glass, he said, in a serious tone: "Miss Marshall, I wish I could tell you how mortified I am and how — how —"

"Mortified! At what?"

"All this trouble — this — whole business."

"But you certainly could not help it!"

"That 's very kind of you, but it 's all wrong — all wrong!"

She smiled and moved away, and as she drew

aside the tapestry and disappeared, he turned his face to the wall, and muttered, "Disgraceful! Disgraceful! I must get well fast."

And he carried out this resolve. Every hour brought new strength. In less than a week he was out of bed and sitting up. During this early period of convalescence — the period of tremulous legs and ravenous hunger — the Fourth of July arrived, and they celebrated the occasion by a sumptuous dinner. There was soup, sardines, cold tongue, dried-apple sauce, baked potatoes, fresh bread, and preserved pears, and the last of the grapes. At table, Elinor faced the empty chair that held the miniature, for the absent lady's right to that place was always respected. Pats sat at the end facing the door. They dined at noon. A bottle of claret was opened and they drank to the health of Uncle Sam.

Toward the end of the dinner, Pats arose, and with one hand on the table to reinforce his treacherous legs, held aloft his glass. Looking over to the dog, who lay by the open door, his head upon his paws, he said:

"Solomon, here's to a certain woman; of all women on earth the most unselfish and forgiving, the most perfect in spirit and far and away

the most beautiful — the Ministering Angel of the Pines. God bless her!"

At these words Solomon, as if in recognition of the sentiment, arose from his position near the door, walked to Elinor's side and, with his habitual solemnity, looked up into her eyes.

"Solomon," said Pats, "you have the soul of a gentleman."

In Elinor's pale face there was a warmer color as she bent over and caressed the dog.

After the dinner all three walked out into the pines, Pats leaning on the lady's arm. The day was warm. But the gentle, southerly breeze came full of life across the Gulf. And the water itself, this day, was the same deep, vivid blue as the water that lies between Naples and Vesuvius. The convalescent and his nurse stopped once or twice to drink in the air — and the scene.

Pats filled his lungs with a long, deep breath. "I feel very light. Hold me fast, or I may float away."

Both his head and his legs seemed flighty and precarious. Those two glasses of claret were proving a little too much — they had set his brain a-dancing. But this he kept to himself.

She noticed the high spirits, but supposed them merely an invalid's delight in getting out of doors.

Under the big trees they rested for a time, in silence, Elinor gazing out across the point, over the glistening sea beyond. The shade of the pines they found refreshing. The convalescent lay at full length, upon his back, looking up with drowsy eyes into the cool, dark canopy, high above. Soothing to the senses was the sighing of the wind among the branches.

"This is good!" he murmured. "I could stay here forever."

"That may be your fate," and her eyes moved sadly over the distant, sailless sea. "It is a month to-day that we have been here."

"So it is, a whole month!"

Elinor sighed. "There is something wrong, somewhere. It seems to me the natural — the only thing — would be for somebody to hunt us up."

"Certainly."

"Could they have sailed by this bay and missed us?"

"Not unless they were idiots. Everybody on the steamer knew we sailed into a bay to get here."

"Still, they may have missed us."

"Well, suppose they did go by us, once or twice, or several times; people don't abandon their best friends and brothers in that off-hand fashion."

After a pause he added, "Something may have happened to Father Burke or to Louise."

"But even then," said Elinor, turning toward him, "would n't they try and discover why I had not arrived? And would n't they hunt *you* up?"

"No, I was to be a surprise. None of them knew I was coming. They think I am still in South Africa."

There was a long silence, broken at last by Pats. "What a hideous practical joke I have turned out! In the first place I strand you here and —"

"No! I was very unjust that day and have repented — and tried to atone."

"Atone! You! Angels defend us! If atonement was due from you, where am I? Instead of getting you away, I go out of my head and have a fever — and am fed — like a baby."

She smiled. "That is hardly your fault."

"Yes, it is. No *man* would do it. Pugs and Persian cats do that sort of thing. For

men there are proper times for giving out. But there is one thing I should like to say — that is, that my life is yours. This skeleton belongs to you, and the soul that goes with it. Henceforth I shall be your slave. I do not aspire to be treated as your equal; just an abject, reverent, willing slave."

She smiled and played with the ears of the sleeping Solomon.

"I am serious," and Pats raised himself on one elbow. "Just from plain, unvarnished gratitude — if from nothing else — I shall always do whatever you command — live, die, steal, commit murder, scrub floors, anything — I don't care what."

"Do you really mean it?"

"I do."

"Then stop talking."

With closed eyes he fell back into his former position. But again, partially raising himself, he asked, "May I say just one thing more?"

"No."

Again he fell back, and there was silence.

For a time Elinor sat with folded hands gazing dreamily beyond the point over the distant gulf, a dazzling, vivid blue beneath the July sun. When at last she turned with a question

upon her lips and saw the closed eyes and tranquil breathing of the convalescent, she held her peace. Then came a drowsy sense of her own fatigue. Cautiously, that the sleeper might not awake, she also reclined, at full length, and closed her eyes. Delicious was the soft air: restful the carpet of pine-needles. No cradle-song could be more soothing than the muffled voices of the pines: and the lady slept.

But Pats was not asleep. He soon opened his eyes and gazed dreamily upward among the branches overhead, then moved his eyes in her direction. For an easier study of the inviting creature not two yards away, he partially raised himself on an elbow. The contemplation of this lady he had found at all times entrancing; but now, from her unconscious carelessness and freedom she became of absorbing interest. Her dignity was asleep, as it were: her caution forgotten. With captivated eyes he drank in the graceful outlines of her figure beneath the white dress, the gentle movement of the chest, the limp hands on the pine-needles. Some of the pride and reserve of the clean-cut, patrician face — of which he stood in awe — had melted away in slumber.

Maybe the murmur of the pines with the

drowsy, languorous breeze relaxed his conscience; at all events the contours of the upturned lips were irresistible. Silently he rolled over once — the soft carpet of pine-needles abetting the manœuvre — until his face was at right angles to her own, and very near. Then cautiously and slowly he pressed his lips to hers. This contact brought a thrill of ecstasy — an intoxication to his senses. But the joy was brief.

More quickly than his startled wits could follow she had pushed away his face and risen to her feet. Erect, with burning cheeks, she looked down into his startled eyes with an expression that brought him sharply to his senses. It was a look of amazement, of incredulity, of contempt — of everything in short that he had hoped never to encounter in her face again. For a moment she stood regarding him, her breast heaving, a stray lock of hair across a hot cheek, the most distant, the most exalted, and the most beautiful figure he had ever seen. Then, without a word, she walked away. Across the open, sunlit space his eyes followed her, until, through the doorway of the cottage, she disappeared.

For a moment he remained as he was, upon the ground, half reclining, staring blankly at the

doorway. Then, slowly, he lowered himself and lay at full length along the ground, his face in his hands.

Of the flight of time he had no knowledge: but, at last, when he rose to his feet he appeared older. He was paler. His eyes were duller. About the mouth had come lines which seemed to indicate a painful resolution. But to the shrunken legs he had summoned a sufficient force to carry him, without wavering, to the cottage door. He entered and dropped, as a man uncertain of his strength, into the nearest chair—the one beside the doorway. Solomon, who had followed at his heels, looked up inquiringly into the emaciated face. Its extraordinary melancholy may have alarmed him. But Pats paid no attention to his dog. He looked at Elinor who was ironing, at the heavy table — the dining-table — in the centre of the room. Her sleeves were rolled back to the elbow; her head bent slightly over as she worked.

The afternoon sun flooded the space in his vicinity and reached far along the floor, touching the skirt of her dress. Behind her the old tapestry with the two marble busts formed a stately background. To the new arrivals she paid no attention.

After a short rest to recover his breath, and his strength, Pats cleared his throat:

"Miss Marshall, you will never know, for I could not begin to tell you — how sorry — how, how ashamed I am for having done — what I did. I don't ask you to forgive me. If you were my sister and another man did it, I should —" He leaned back, at a loss for words.

"I don't say it was the claret. I don't try to excuse myself in any way. But one thing I ask you to believe: that I did not realize what I was doing."

He arose and stood with his hand on the back of the chair. As he went on his voice grew less steady. "Why, I look upon you as something sacred; you are so much finer, higher, better than other people. In a way I feel toward you as toward my mother's memory; and that is a holy thing. I could as soon insult one as the other. And I realize and shall never forget all that you have done for me."

In a voice over which he seemed to be losing control, he went on, more rapidly:

"And it's more than all that — it's more than gratitude and respect. I —" For an instant he hesitated, then his words came hotly, with a reckless haste. "I love you as I never thought

of loving any human being. It began when I first saw you on the wharf. You don't know what it means. Why, I could lay down my life for you — a thousand times — and joyfully."

From Elinor these words met with no outward recognition. She went quietly on with her ironing.

Pats drew a deep breath, sank into his chair and muttered, in a lower tone, "I never meant to tell you that. Now I — I — have done it."

During the pause that followed these last words she said, quietly, without looking up:

"I knew it already."

He straightened up. "Knew what already?"

She lifted a collar she was ironing and examined it, but made no reply.

"You knew what already?" he repeated. "That I was in love with you?"

She nodded, still regarding the collar.

"Impossible!"

She laid the collar beside other collars already ironed and took up another; but he heard no answer.

"How did you know?" he asked. "From what?"

"From various things."

"What things?"

There was no reply.

"From things I did?"

She nodded, rather solemnly, and her face, what he could see of it — seemed very serious. Pats was watching her intently, and exclaimed, in surprise:

"That is very curious, for I kept it to myself!"

"Any woman would have known."

Pats leaned back, and frowned. A torturing thought possessed him. In an anxious tone he said: "I hope I did not talk much when I had the fever."

As she made no reply he studied the back of her head for some responsive motion. But none came.

"Did I?" he demanded.

"Yes."

A look of terror came into his face and his voice grew fainter as he asked: "Did I talk about you?"

"Freely."

With trembling fingers he felt for his handkerchief and drew it across his brow. "Did I say things that — that — I should be ashamed of?"

She nodded.

Pats sunk lower in his chair and closed his

eyes. Judging from the lines in his cadaverous face the last three minutes had added years to his age.

"Would you mind telling me," he asked in a deferential voice, so low that it barely reached her, "whether they were impertinent and ungentlemanly — or — or — what?"

"Everything."

His lips were dry, and on his face came a look of anguish — of unspeakable shame. There was a pause, broken only by the faint sound of the flatiron.

"Then I really talked about you — at one time?"

She nodded.

"More than once?"

"For days together."

Pats closed his eyes in pain, and there was a silence. Then he opened them: "Would you mind telling me some of the things I said?"

"I could not remember."

"Have you forgotten *all?*"

"No — but I prefer not repeating them."

On Pats's face the look of shame deepened. In a very low voice he said: "Please remember that I was not myself."

"I make allowance for that."

"Excuse my asking, but if I was out of my head and irresponsible, what could I have said to make you believe that I was — in love with you?"

"You protested so violently that you were not."

With unspeakable horror and humiliation Pats began to realize the awful possibilities of that divulgence of his most secret thoughts. A cold chill crept up his spine. He looked down at the floor, from fear that she might glance in his direction and meet his eyes. Solomon, who felt there was trouble in the air, came nearer and placed his cold wet snout against the clinched hands of his master; but the hands were unresponsive.

At last, the stricken man mustered courage enough to stammer in a constrained voice:

"It is not from curiosity I ask it, but would you mind telling me — giving me at least some idea of what I said?"

Elinor carefully deposited a neatly folded handkerchief upon a little pile of other handkerchiefs. Then, looking down at the table and not at Pats, she said calmly, as she continued her work:

"You said I was a pious hypocrite — cold-blooded and heartless — and a fool. You repeated a great many times that I was superior, pretentious, and 'everlastingly stuck on myself,' — I think that was the expression. Of course, I cannot repeat your own words. They were forcible, but exceedingly profane."

"Oh!"

"You kept mentioning three other men who could have me for all you cared."

Pats felt himself blushing. He frowned, grew hot, and bit his lip. Mingled with his mortification came an impotent rage. He felt that behind her contempt she was laughing at him. As there was a pause, he muttered bitterly:

"Go on."

But she continued silently with her ironing.

"Please go on. Tell me more; the worst. I should like to know it."

Raising one of the handkerchiefs higher for a closer examination, she added: "You sang comic songs, inserting my name, and with language I supposed no gentlemen could use."

Pats gasped. His cheeks tingled. In shame he closed his eyes. The ticking of the old

clock behind the door seemed to hammer his degradation still deeper into his aching soul. As his wandering, miserable gaze encountered the marble face of the Marshal of France he thought the old soldier was watching him in contemptuous enjoyment.

But Elinor went on quietly with her ironing.

Suddenly into his feverish brain there came a thought, heaven-born, inspiring. It lifted him to his feet. With a firm stride he approached the table. No legs could have done it better. He stood beside her, but she turned her back as she went on with the ironing. His expression was of a man exalted, yet anxious; and he spoke in a low but unruly voice.

"You say you have known I was in love with you ever since the fever?"

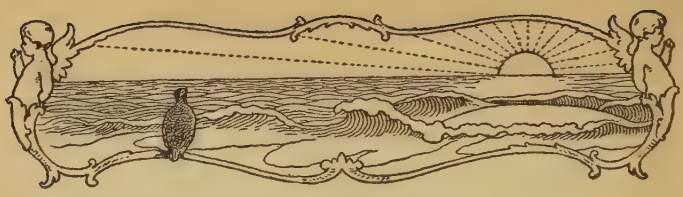
She nodded slightly, without looking up.

"And yet you have been very — kind, and not — not annoyed or offended. Perhaps after all, you — you — oh, please turn around!"

But she did not turn, so he stepped around in front. Into her cheeks had come a sudden color, and in her eyes he saw the light that lifts a lover to the highest heaven.

It was Pat's cry of joy and his impulsive and somewhat violent embrace of this lady

that awakened the dog reposing by the door. Looking in the direction of the voice Solomon seemed to see but a single figure. This was a natural mistake. In another moment, however, he realized that extraordinary things were happening, — that these two distinct and separate beings with a single outline signified some momentous change in human life. Whether from an overmastering sympathy, from envy, delicacy, or disgust, Solomon looked the other way. Then, thoughtfully, with drooping head, he walked slowly out and left the lovers to themselves.



X

TRAPPING A QUAIL

HAPPY were the days that followed. Pats, uplifted with his own joy, became a lavish dispenser of cheerfulness and folly. Elinor, with unclouded eyes and a warmer color in her cheeks, seemed to have drifted into the Harbor of Serenity. Both were at peace with creation.

In pleasant weather they strolled among the pines, worked in the little garden behind the house, fished, played upon the beach, or explored the neighborhood. When it rained, which was seldom, they cleaned up the house, read books and old letters, ransacking trunks and drawers trying to discover the secret of the departed owner. But in vain. The departed owner had been careful to leave no clew to his identity

or of his reason for abiding there. They did find, however, between the leaves of a book, a little chart of the point done by his own hand apparently, and beneath it was written

La Pointe de Lory.

So they felt they had learned the name of the place, but whether it was the official name or one given by the old gentleman for his private use they could not discover.

"There is a town of St. Lory in the south of France," said Pats. "I knew a man who came from there. Perhaps our host was from that vicinity."

The days went by and no sail appeared. This, however, was of slight importance. In fact, during that first ecstatic period, nothing was important, — that is, nothing like a ship. It was during this period they forgot to keep tally of time, and they either lost or gained a day, they knew not which — nor cared.

All days were good, whatever the weather. Time never dragged. With a companion of another temperament Elinor could easily have passed moments of depression. For a girl in her position there certainly was abundant material for regret. But the courage and the un-

wavering cheerfulness of Pats were contagious. He and melancholy were never partners. A discovery, however, was made one morning on the little beach that, for a moment at least, filled Elinor with misgivings.

Midway along this beach they found a bucket, rolling about on the sand, driven here and there by the incoming waves.

"That is worth saving," and Pats, watching his opportunity, followed up a receding breaker and procured the prize. It resembled a fire-bucket; and there were white letters around the centre. Elinor ran up and stood beside him, and, as he held it aloft, turning it slowly about to follow the words, both read aloud:

"Of — the — North — Maid."

"*Maid of the North!*" exclaimed Elinor, grasping Pats by the arm. "Oh, I hope nothing has happened to her!"

"Probably not. More likely some sailor lost it overboard." Then, looking up and down the beach, "There is no wreckage of any kind. If she had blown up or struck a rock there would surely be something more than one water-bucket to come ashore and tell us. I guess she is all right."

"But how exciting! It seems like meeting an old friend."

She held it in her own hands. "Poor thing! You did look so melancholy swashing about on this lonely beach."

When they returned to the house they carried the bucket with them.

Pats had his own misgivings, however. One or two other objects he had discerned floating on the water farther out, too far away to distinguish what they were. And the fact that no search had been made for Elinor was in itself disquieting. But as his chief aim at present was to bring contentment to the girl beside him, he carefully refrained from any betrayal of these doubts. Nothing else, however, that might cause alarm was washed ashore.

And Pats, all this time, was growing fat. His increasing plumpness was perceptible from day to day, and it proved a constant source of mirth to his companion. One morning he appeared in a pair of checkered trousers purchased in South Africa during his skeleton period. They seemed on the verge of exploding from the outward pressure of the legs within. Elinor made no effort to suppress her merriment. She called him "Fatsy." And to the dog, who

regarded the trousers with his usual solemnity, she remarked:

"O, Solomon!
See him grow fat!
Our erstwhile skinny,
Diaphanous Pat."

But with "Fatsy's" flesh came increase of strength, and he proved a hard worker. As soon as he was strong enough he began to build the raft by which they hoped to cross the river. But progress was slow for his endurance had limits, and he could work but an hour or two each day. Their plan was to paddle across the river on this raft as they floated down. Owing to the swiftness of the current they built the raft nearly a mile farther up the stream. With the walk to and fro, which also taxed the builder's strength, the month of July brought little progress. One afternoon, they sauntered home, the broad, swift, silent river on their right, the sun just above the trees on the opposite bank. Close at hand, on their own side of the river the nearest pines stood forth in strong relief against the mysterious depths behind. Near the river's bank long shadows from these towering trunks lay in purple bars across the smooth, brown carpet. It was about

half-way home that the man, with an air of weariness, seated himself upon a fallen tree. Elinor regarded him with an anxious face.

"Patsy, you have done too much again." As he looked up, she saw in his eyes an expression she had learned to associate with levity and foolishness. "Be serious. You are very tired, now are n't you?"

"Just pleasantly tired. But if I were suddenly kissed by a popular belle it would give me new strength."

When, a moment later, he arose, fresh life and vigor seemed certainly to have been acquired. Catching her by the waist, he hummed a waltz and away they floated, over the pine-needles, he in gray and she in white, like wingless spirits of the wood. When the waltz had ended and they were walking hand in hand, and a little out of breath, the lady remarked:

"When I am frivolous in these woods I feel very wicked. They are so silent and reserved themselves, so solemn and so very high-minded that it seems a desecration."

"All wrong," said Pats. "This is a temple built for lovers: shady, spacious, and jammed full of mystery — and safe."

"But it's the spaciousness and mystery that make it so like a temple and suggest serious thoughts."

"Not to a healthy mind. Oh, no! This gloom is here for a purpose. Pious thoughts should seek the light, but lovers need obscurity. They always have and they always will."

A few steps farther on he stopped and faced her, still holding her hand: "If you will feed the hens to-night, bring in the wood and wash the dishes, you may embrace me once again — now, right here."

She snatched away her head. He sprang forward to catch her — but she was away, beyond his reach. She ran on ahead and Pats, after a short pursuit, gave up the chase, for his fallible legs were still unfit for speed. With a mocking laugh and a wave of the hand she hastened on toward the cottage. Following more leisurely he watched the graceful figure in the white dress hurrying on before him until it was lost among the pines.

Just at the edge of the woods, not a hundred feet from the house, he stopped. Standing behind a tree so that Elinor, if she came to the door, could not see him, he whistled three notes. These notes, clear and full, were in imitation of

a quail. And he did it exceedingly well. The imitation was masterly.

But no one appeared at the cottage door, and after a short silence he repeated the call.

"Perfect!"

Pats started and turned about.

"A very clever hoax!"

And as Elinor stepped forth from behind a neighboring tree, there was a look in her eyes that caused the skilful deceiver to bow his head. With a slight movement of the hands, the palms turned outward, as if in surrender, he offered a mute appeal for mercy.

"So you are that quail!" And slowly up and down she moved her head as if realizing with reluctance the bitterness of the discovery. "What fun you must have had in fooling me so often and so easily! And the many times that I have hurried to that door and waited to hear it again! What was my offence that you should pay me back in such a fashion?"

"Oh, don't put it that way! Don't speak like that!"

"And my sentiment about it! My saying that I loved the sound because it took me back to my own home in Massachusetts — all that must have been very amusing."

"Listen. Let me explain."

"And to keep on making me ridiculous, day after day, when I was on the verge of collapse from pure exhaustion — yes, it showed a nice feeling."

"Elinor, you are very unjust. Let me tell you just how it happened. The first morning that I could walk as far as this, you left me here at this very spot, and you went back to the house. I was told to whistle if I wanted anything. You remember?"

Almost imperceptibly and with contempt she nodded.

"Well, when I did whistle, I whistled in that way — like a quail. You thought it was a real quail and you did n't come out. When finally you helped me back you spoke of hearing a quail, and of how much pleasure it gave you. You hoped he would not go away." And he smiled humbly, as he added: "And you made me promise not to shoot him."

She merely turned her eyes away, over the river, toward the sunset.

"And I thought then that if it gave you so much pleasure, why not keep on with it? The Lord knows the favors a helpless invalid can bestow are few enough! And the Lord also

knows that I have no accomplishments. I cannot sing, or play, or recite poetry. At that time I could not even start a fire or bring in water. In fact, my sole accomplishment was to imitate a bird. 'T is a humble gift, but I resolved to make the most of it."

She stood facing him, about a dozen feet away, a striking figure, with the light from the setting sun on her white dress, the dark recesses of the wood for a background. Into her face came no signs of relenting. But he detected in her eyebrows a slight movement as if to maintain a frown, and he ventured nearer, slowly, as a dog just punished manœuvres for forgiveness. Removing his straw hat he knelt before her, his eyes upon the ground.

"I confess to a guilty feeling every time I did it. I knew a day of reckoning would come. But I was postponing it. I am ashamed, really ashamed; but on my honor my motive was good. Please be merciful."

"Are you serious? — or trying to be funny, and not really caring much about it?"

"I am serious; very serious."

"Do you realize what a contemptible trick it was — how mean-spirited and ungrateful?"

Lower still sank his head. "I do."

"And you promise never to deceive me again?"

"I swear it."

"You value my good opinion, I suppose."

"I would rather die than lose it!"

"Well, you have lost it, and forever."

From the bowed head came a groan. At this point Solomon approached the kneeling figure and placed his nose inquiringly against the criminal's ear. And the criminal involuntarily shrank from the cold contact. At this the lady smiled, but unobserved by the kneeling man.

"Are you sincerely and thoroughly ashamed?"

"Yumps."

"What?"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

"I don't like your manner."

"Please like it. I am honest now. I shall always be good."

"You could n't. It is n't in you."

"There is going to be a mighty effort."

"Get up!"

He obeyed. As their eyes met, he smiled, but with a frown she pointed toward the cottage. "Turn around and walk humbly with your head down. You are not to speak until spoken to. And you are to be in disgrace for three days.'

"Oh! Three days?"

"Go ahead."

And again he obeyed.

Elinor was firm. For three days the disgrace endured. But it was not of a nature to demolish hope or even to retard digestion. And Solomon, who was a keen observer, displayed no unusual sympathy, and evidently failed to realize that his master was in any serious trouble.

On pleasant evenings Pats and Elinor often went to the beach below and sat upon the rocks, always attended by Solomon, the only chaperon at hand. Here they were nearer the water. And one evening they found much happiness in watching a big, round moon as it rose from the surface of the Gulf. The silence, the shimmer of the moonlight on the waters — all tended to draw lovers closer together. Already the heads of these two people were so near that the faintest tone sufficed. And they murmured many things — things strictly between themselves, that would appear of an appalling foolishness if repeated here — or anywhere. They also talked on serious subjects; subjects so transcendentally serious as to be of interest only by night. Like all other lovers they exchanged

confidences. Once, when Pats was speaking of his family she suddenly withdrew her hand. "By the way, there is something to be explained. Tell me about that interview with your father."

"Which interview?"

"The disgraceful, murderous one."

Pats reflected. "There were several."

"Oh, Patsy! Are you so bad as that?"

"As what?"

"But you did not mean to do him injury, did you?"

"*I* do *him* injury?" he inquired, in a mild surprise. "Why, what are you driving at, Elinor?"

"I mean the quarrel in the arbor."

"And what happened?"

"You know very well."

"Indeed I do! But there were several quarrels. Which one do you mean?"

"I mean the one when you were violent — and murderous."

"But I was n't."

"Yes, you were. I know all about it."

"If you know all about it, what do you want me to tell?"

"Tell about the worst quarrel of all."

"That must have been the last one."

"Well, tell me about that."

Pats took a long breath, then began: "The old gentleman was a hot Catholic. There was no harm in that, you will think. And I am not such a fool as to spoil a night like this by a religious discussion."

"Go on."

"Well, he insisted upon my becoming a Catholic priest. Now, for a young man just out of college — and Harvard College at that — it was a good deal to ask. Was n't it?"

"Continue."

"One day in that summer-house he sailed away into one of his tempers — did you ever happen to see him in that condition?"

"No, but I have heard of them."

"Well, my mother was a Unitarian. So was I. And the gulf between a Unitarian and a Catholic priest is about as wide as from here to that moon. It was like asking me to become a beautiful young lady — or a green elephant — I simply could n't. Perhaps you agree with me?"

"Go on. Don't ask so many questions."

"I told him, respectfully, it was impossible. Then as he made a rush for me I saw, from his

eyes and his white face, that murder and sudden death were in the air. Being younger I could dodge him and get away, and that so increased his fury that he fell down on the gravel walk in a sort of convulsion — or fit. I ran into the house for assistance, and while Sally and Martha tried to bring him to I went for the doctor."

A silence followed this story. At last Elinor inquired if his father persisted.

"Persisted! That question, oh, Angel Cook, shows how little you knew my father! As soon as he recovered he lost no time in telling me to leave the house and never see him again."

"And what happened?"

"I vanished."

"Oh!" A sympathetic pressure of his hand and the girl beside him leaned closer still. "Horrible! So you wandered out into the world and this is your home-coming. Well, Patsy, I shall never treat you in that way. When you are very obstinate I shall just put my arms around your neck and treat you very differently."

"Well," said Pats, "I think it safer for you to be doing that most of the time, anyway. It might stave off any inclination to obstinacy."

Here followed a snug, celestial silence, broken

at last by Pats. "Would you mind telling me, O Light of the North, where you heard I was the attacking party at that interview?"

"No, I must not tell."

"Did Father Burke make you promise?"

"Why do you mention *him?*"

"For lots of reasons. One is that he is the only person on earth who could possibly have told you. But it was clever of him to warn you against me. I knew from his expression when he said good-by, on the boat, that he thought he had settled my prospects, and to his perfect satisfaction. However, I don't ask you to betray him. And I bear no malice. He did his best to undo me, but Love and all the angels were on my side."

She laughed gently. "And you all made a strong combination, Patsy."

Then another long silence, and soon he felt the lady leaning more heavily against him. The head drooped and he knew she slumbered. Having no wish to disturb her, he sat for a while without moving, and watched the moon and thought delectable thoughts of the creature by his side. And as his thoughts, involuntarily, and in an amiable spirit, travelled back to Father Burke, he smiled as he pictured quite a different

expression on the face of the priest when he should learn what had happened. And the smile seemed reflected in the radiant countenance of the big, round moon mounting slowly in the heavens. She appeared to beam approval upon him and upon the precious burden he supported. But with the drowsiness which soon came stealing over him he saw — or dreamed he saw — out in the glistening path of light between the moon and him, not far from where he sat, an object like a human face, upturned, moving gently with the waves. And mingling among the quivering moonbeams around the head was a silvery halo that might be the hair of Father Burke; for the face resembled his.

Pats was startled and became wide awake. Even then, he thought he had a glimpse of the face with its silver hair, as it drifted out of the bar of light into the darkness, slowly, toward the sea.

XI

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THERE came, with August, a perceptible shortening of the days. Cooler nights gave warning that the brief Canadian summer was nearing its end.

Pats labored on the raft, but the work was long. A float that would bear in safety two people down the river's current — and possibly out to sea — demanded size and strength and weight. Felling trees, trimming logs, and steering them down the river to the "ship-yard," proved a slower undertaking than had been foreseen. But nobody complained. The air they breathed and the life they led were in themselves annihilators of despair. It was an exhilarating, out-of-door life, — a life of love and labor and of ecstatic repose.

Both Elinor and Pats were up with the sun, and the days were never too long. To them it

mattered little whether the evenings were long or short or cold or warm, for by the time the dishes were washed and the chores were done, they became too sleepy to be of interest to each other. And when the lady retired to her own chamber behind the tapestries, Pats, at his end of the cottage, always whistled gently or broke the silence in one way or another as a guarantee of distance, that she might feel a greater security.

As for lovers' quarrels none occurred that were seriously respected by either party. In fact there was but little to break the monotony of that solid, absolute content with which all days began and ended.

"'T is love that makes the world go round."

There is no doubt of that, but two lovers, with unfailing appetites, however exalted their devotion, are sure, in time, to produce conspicuous results with any ordinary store of provisions. In the present instance the discovery — or realization — of this truth was accidental. It came one morning as Elinor, in a blue and white apron, with sleeves rolled up, was preparing corn-bread at the kitchen table — so they called the table near the fireplace at the end of

the room. Pats came up from the cellar with a face of unusual seriousness.

"I have been an awful fool!"

She looked up with her sweetest smile:

"And that troubles you, darling?"

Without replying, he laid three potatoes on the table.

"I told you to get four."

"These are the last."

"Is n't there a second barrel?"

"No."

"Why, Patsy! We both saw it!"

"That's where I was a fool. I took it for granted the other barrel held potatoes because it looked like the first one."

"But it was full of something."

"Yes, but not potatoes. It is crockery, glassware, a magnificent table-set. Old Sèvres, I should say."

"What a shame!" And with the back of a hand whose fingers were covered with corn-meal, she brushed a stray lock from her face.

"Yes," he went on, "it's a calamity, for we cannot afford it. I took an account of stock while I was down there, and all we have now in the way of vegetables is the dried apples. Of

course, there's the garden truck, — the peas, beans, and the corn, — if it ever ripens."

After further conversation on that subject, Elinor said, with a sigh: "Well, we did enjoy those baked potatoes! We shall have to eat more eggs, that's all."

"Eggs!" and his face became distorted. "I am so chock full of eggs now that everything looks yellow. I dream of them. I cackle in my sleep. My whole interior is egg. I breathe and think egg. I gag when I hear a hen."

"But you are going to eat them all the same. We have a dozen a day, and you must do your share."

"I won't."

"Yes, you will."

As Pats's eyes fell on Solomon, he brightened up. "There's that dog eats only the very things we are unable to spare. Why should n't *he* eat eggs?"

"You might try and teach him."

"Tell me," said Pats, "why hens should lay nothing but eggs, always eggs? Why should n't they lay pears, lemons, tomatoes, — things we really need?"

In silence the lady continued her work.

"Angel Cook?"

"Well?"

"What do you think?"

"I think, considering your years, that your conversation is surprising. Eggs are very nourishing, and we are lucky to have them. Did n't I make you a nice omelette only a few days ago?"

"You did, and I never knew a better for its purpose. I still use it for cleaning the windows."

"Really! Well, you had better make it last, for you won't get another."

"Oh, don't be angry! I thought you meant it as a keepsake."

He approached with repentant air, but when threatened with her doughy hands, he retreated, and sat on the big chest by the window. This chest had served for his bed since his convalescence.

Elinor frowned, and pointed to the fire. Pats arose and laid on a fresh stick, then knelt upon the hearth and, with a seventeenth-century bellows, inlaid with silver, that would have graced the drawing-room of a palace, he coaxed the fire into a more active life.

"Now go out and bring in some wood. More small sticks. Not the big ones."

XII

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR

DURING dinner, which occurred at noon, there were fewer words that day, and with somewhat more reflection than was usual. The store of provisions now rapidly disappearing, together with no prospect of immediate escape, furnished rich material for thought. Both knew the raft might prove a treacherous reliance. Instead of landing them on the opposite bank of the river there were excellent chances of its carrying them out to sea. And the prevailing westerly wind was almost sure to drive them backward to the east again. Pats had been all over this so many times in his own mind, and with Elinor, that the subject was pretty well exhausted. But still, from habit, he speculated.

"A penny for your thoughts."

He raised his eyes, and as they met her own his habitual cheerfulness returned. "My thoughts are worth more than that, for I was thinking of you."

"Something bad?"

"I was wondering how many days you could foot it through the wilderness before giving out."

"For ever, little Patsy, if you were with me."

"Then we have nothing to fear. We can both march on for ever. You are not only food and drink to me, — that is, the equivalent of corncake, potatoes, marmalade, and claret, — but your presence is life and strength and a spiritual tonic."

"That is a good sentiment," and she reached forth a hand, which he took.

"Merely to look at you," he continued, "will be exhilarating on a long march. And to hear your voice, and touch you — why, my soul becomes drunk in thinking of it."

"Then you expect to be in a state of intoxication during the whole journey?"

"That is my hope."

It happened, a few minutes later, that she herself became preoccupied, her eyes fixed

thoughtfully upon the little portrait on the opposite chair.

"A dollar for your thoughts."

"Why so much?"

"Because any thought of yours," said Pats, "is worth at least a dollar."

"Thanks."

"You are thinking, as usual, of that woman. The woman who has my place."

"It is *her* place; she had it before we came."

"But you ought to be looking at *me* all this time. I am the person for you to think about. I shall end by hating the woman."

"Oh, you must n't be jealous. You *can't* hate her. Such a gentle face! And then all the mystery that goes with her! I would give anything to know who she was."

Pats scowled: "You would give Solomon and me, among other things."

"No, never!" And again she extended the hand, but he frowned upon it and drew back into the farther corner of his chair. She laughed. "And is Fatsy really jealous?"

"No, not jealous; but hurt, disgusted, outraged, and upset."

"Because I insist upon treating our hostess with respect and recognizing her rights?"

"Our hostess! More likely some female devil who beguiled the old man. Probably he was so ashamed of her he never dared go home again."

"Oh, Pats! I blush for you."

"It 's a silly face."

"It is a face full of character."

"Oh, come now, Elinor! It would pass for a portrait of the full moon."

"Well, the full moon has character. And I love those big merry eyes with the funny little melancholy kind of droop at the outer corners. Poor thing! She must have had a sad life out here in the wilderness."

"Thank you."

As their eyes met he frowned again, and she, for the third time, extended the hand. "A sad life, because she had no Pats."

But he refused the hand. "That is very clever, but too late. The stab had already reached home."

She smiled and began to fold her napkin.

"To return to business, Miss Marshall, of Boston, the provisions are so low that we really must decide on something."

"How long will they last?"

"Perhaps a month or six weeks. Could you

pull through the winter on eggs and dried apples —and candles?"

"If necessary."

He laughed. "I believe you could! You are an angel, a Spartan, and a sport. Your nature is simply an extravagant profusion of the highest human attributes. And the worst of it is, you look it. You are too beautiful — in a superior, overtopping way. You scare me."

She pushed back her chair. "You have said all that before."

"You remember the frog who was in love with the moon?"

She regarded him from the corners of her eyes, but made no reply.

"He used to sit in his puddle and adore her. One pleasant evening she came down out of the sky and kissed him."

"That was very good of her. And then what happened?"

"It killed him."

Elinor pushed back her chair, arose from the table and stood beside him. "Do you think it was a happy death?"

"Of course it was! Lucky devil!"

"Well, close your eyes and dream that I am the moon looking down at you."

With face upturned, just enough to make it easier for the moon, Pats closed his eyes. In serene anticipation he awaited the delectable contact that never failed to send a thrill of pleasure through all his being. But the tranquil, beatific smile changed swiftly to a very different expression as he felt against his lips — a slice of dried apple. And the cold moon stepped back beyond his reach, and laughed.

When the table had been cleared and the dishes washed Pats, Elinor, and Solomon went out behind the house and stood near the edge of the cliff. Eastward, across the bay, Pats pointed to a distant headland running out into the Gulf, the highest land in sight.

"As near as I can guess that hill is about twenty miles away. If there is nothing between to hinder I can walk it in a day. Now, from that highest point I can probably get a view for many miles. Who knows what lies beyond? There may be a settlement very near. In that case we are saved."

"And suppose there is none?"

"Then I return, and we are no worse off than we were before."

Elinor stood beside him, regarding the distant

promontory with thoughtful eyes. He put his arm around her waist. "You see the sense of it, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose so. How long would you be gone?"

"Not over three days."

"That is, three days and two nights."

"Yes."

"And if the ground is very rough, and there are swamps, and divers things, it might be longer still."

"Hardly likely."

"And what am I to do while you are gone?"

"Oh, just wait."

She moved away and stood facing him.

"Yes, that is like a man. Just wait! Just wait and worry. Just watch by day and lie awake at night. Just be sick with anxiety for four or five days. You would find me dead when you returned. Why should not I go with you?"

He seemed surprised. Into the ever-cheerful face came a look of anxiety. "I am afraid it would be a hard tramp for you, Angel Cook. And there would be twice as much luggage to carry, and we should be a longer time away."

"I will carry my own luggage."

"Never!"

"But I shall go with you."

"Is that a final decision?"

She nodded, an emphatic, half-fierce little nod, and frowned.

Pats smiled. "Miss Elinor Marshall, I am, as I have before remarked, your humble and adoring slave. Your will is law. When shall we start?"

"Whenever you say."

"To-morrow?"

She nodded, this time with a smile.

"Early?"

"As early as you please."

"Then at crack o' dawn we go."

And the next morning, at crack o' dawn, they started off, Pats with a knapsack so voluminous that he resembled a pedler.

Elinor thought it too much for him to carry. "You can never walk all day with that on your back. Pedestrians that I have seen never carry such loads."

"Then you have never seen pedestrians who carry their food and lodgings with them. And you forget that we are not in the zone of large hotels."

"I feel very guilty. If I were not along you would have less to carry."

"Have no fears, Light of the North. If one of us three falls by the wayside it will be neither Solomon nor myself."

This knapsack consisted of three blankets, — two of flannel, one of rubber, — some claret bottles filled with water, and food for five days. There was also coffee and a little brandy.

As they started off, along their own little beach, the sun was just appearing over the strip of land ahead. Solomon, in high spirits, galloped madly about on the hard sand, with an occasional plunge among the breakers. But Pats and Elinor, although similarly affected by the morning air, economized their steps, for a long day's tramp was before them.

At the eastern end of the beach, before entering the woods, both stopped and took a final look toward home. A rosy light was on sea and land. Beyond the beach, with its tumbling waves all aglow from the rising sun, stood the Point of Lory, and their eyes lingered about the cottage. Nestling peacefully among the pines, it also caught the morning light.

"Adieu, little house," said Elinor. And then, turning to Pats, "Why, I am really sorry to leave it."

"So am I, for it has given me the happiest days of my life — or of anybody's life."

In and out among the trees they tramped, three hours or more, with intervals for rest, generally through the woods, but always keeping near the coast unless for a shorter cut across the base of some little peninsula. Elinor stood it well and enjoyed with Pats the excitement of discovery. After a long nooning they pushed on until nearly sunset. When they halted for the night both explorers were still in good condition; but the next morning, in starting off, each confessed to a stiffness in the lower muscles. This disappeared, however, after an hour's walking.

Early in the afternoon of this second day's march they stood upon the top of the hill which, from a distance, had promised a commanding view. But they found, as so often happens to every kind of climber, that another hill, still higher and farther on, was the one to be attained. So they pushed ahead. Just before reaching the summit of this final hill Pats halted.

"Now comes a critical moment. What do you think we shall see?"

Elinor shook her head sadly. "I am prepared for the worst; for the wilderness, without a sign of human life."

Pats's ever-cheerful face took on a smile. "I suspect you are right, but I am not admitting it officially. I prophesy that we shall look down upon a large and very fashionable summer hotel."

"Awful thought!" And she smiled as she surveyed her own attire and that of Pats. "What a sensation we should create! You with that faded old flannel shirt, your two days' beard, and those extraordinary South African trousers; and I, sunburnt as a gypsy, with my hair half down —"

"No hair like it in the world —"

"And this weather-beaten dress. What would they take us for?"

"For what we are — tramps, happy tramps."

Five minutes later they stood upon the summit. To the eastward, as far as sight could reach, lay the same wild coast. For several miles every detail of the shore stood clearly out beneath a cloudless sky. Of man or his habitation they saw no sign. To the vast sweep of pines — like an ocean of sombre green — there was no visible limit either to the east or north. And southward, over the blue expanse, no sail or craft of any kind disturbed the surface of the sea. Here and there along the coast shone a strip of yellow beach with its fringe of glistening foam. Not far away

an opening among the trees, extending inland for several miles, showed the grasses of a salt marsh.

In silence Pats and Elinor gazed upon this scene. Beautiful it was, grand, indescribably impressive; but it brought to both observers the keenest sense of their isolation. The vastness of it, and the stillness, brought a vague despair, and, to the girl, a sort of terror. Tears came to her eyes.

Pats turned and saw them. His own face had taken on a sadder look than was often allowed there, but his eyes met hers with their customary cheerfulness. For the first time since their acquaintance, Elinor wept — very gently, but she wept. All that a sympathetic and unskilful lover could do was done by Pats. He patted her back, kissed her hair, and suggested brandy. Her collapse, however, was of short duration. She drew back and smiled and apologized for her weakness.

"I am ashamed of myself for breaking down. But it's the first time, is n't it?"

"Yes, it is; and I have wondered at your courage. But do it all the time if you feel the least bit better."

She smiled and shook her head. "No, I shall

not collapse again. I shall follow your example. You are always in good spirits."

"I? Well, I should think I might be! Here I am alone in the wilderness with the girl that all men desire,—and not a rival in sight! Why, I am in Heaven! I had never dreamed that a fellow could have such an existence."

When they descended the hill and started leisurely on the homeward march two smiling faces were illumined by the western sun.

XIII

THE HORN OF PLENTY

HEAVY showers escorted the travellers during the last afternoon of their homeward march. Of the trio Solomon was the wettest, for his two friends were enfolded in a rubber blanket, drawn over their heads and shoulders and held together in front. Thus, by walking arm in arm and keeping close together, they escaped a soaking. But Elinor was tired, with a tendency to sadness. This was excusable, as the failure of the expedition left the choice of a perilous experiment on the raft or of starvation at the cottage. Even the saturated Solomon, as he preceded them with drooping head, seemed to have lost his buoyancy.

But Pats, whatever his inward state, continued an unfailing well-spring of cheerfulness and courage. Not a disheartening word escaped him, nor a sign of weakening. And his efforts to enliven his companion were persistent — and successful. Being of a hopeful and self-reliant nature this task was not so very difficult.

At last, toward the middle of the afternoon, in rain and mist, they came to the eastern end of their own beach. But all view was shut out. Both the cottage and the point of land on which it stood were hidden in the fog. As they tramped along this beach, on the hard wet sand, the wind and rain from the open sea came strong against their faces.

"It will be good to get back," said Elinor.

"Yes, but I like this better," and Pats drew the rubber blanket a little closer still. "Our life at the cottage is too confined; too cut and dried, too conventional and ceremonious."

"Too much company?"

"No, just enough. But too much routine and sameness. Above all, it is too laborious. The charm of this life is having no chores to be done. No shaving; no floors to scrub or windows to clean."

"Poor boy! And you must work doubly hard when we first get back. To begin with, you will have to eat your half of all the eggs that have been laid."

"Not an egg! I swear it!"

"Let's see — four days. That will make about thirty-six eggs. You must eat eighteen this afternoon."

Their heads were of necessity very close together, and as Pats with a frown turned his face to look at her, she continued: "And to-morrow being your birthday, you shall have a double allowance. Just think of being thirty-one years old! Why, Patsy, it take one's breath away."

"Yes, it is a stupendous thought."

"How does it feel?"

"Well, I can still see and hear a little; and I am holding on to my teeth. Of course, the lungs, liver, brain, and all the more perishable organs have long since gone."

"Naturally."

"But the heart is still there, and thumping hard and strong for the finest woman in the world."

"Well, the heart is everything, and you are a good boy — I mean a good old man."

"Thanks."

"And as soon as we get to the cottage I shall —" She pressed his arm, stopped suddenly, and listened. "Why, what was that?"

"What was what?"

"Out on the water, off the point there. I heard a noise like a steamboat."

Both listened.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"I certainly thought so."

Again they listened. Nothing was heard, however, except the lapping of the waves along the beach.

At last, in a low tone, Pats muttered:

"A whole fleet might be within a mile on a day like this and nobody know it. Are you sure it was n't Solomon? He is a heavy breather sometimes."

She sighed. "Very likely. With this blanket about one's ears anything was possible."

They started on again. A few moments later the final shower had ceased. Swiftly the clouds dispersed, but the mist, although illumined by the sun, still lingered over land and sea. Solomon, followed by his friends, climbed the gentle ascent at the end of the beach, and as they has-

tened on among the pines all felt a mild excitement on approaching the cottage.

Gathered about the doorway, as if to welcome the returning travellers, stood a few white hens and the pompous rooster. To this impressive bird Pats took off his hat with a deferential bow.

"Glad to see you again, Senator."

"Why 'Senator'? Because nobody listens when he talks?" Elinor had been to Washington.

"Yes; and he knows so little and feels so good over it."

From its hiding-place behind the vines, Pats took the key and opened the door. With a military salute he stood aside, and the lady entered. He followed; and as he unslung his knapsack Elinor looked about her with a pleased expression.

"How rich it all is!" she exclaimed. "I had forgotten what a splendid collection we had."

Pats drew a long breath, as if to inhale the magnificence.

"Are you familiar with bric-à-brac shops?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And with the rooms of old palaces and châteaux that are opened only when visitors arrive?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is that smell."

She also inhaled, and closed her eyes. "So it is."

"It 's the tapestries and old wood, and the bloom on the paintings, I suppose. But it 's good. I like it."

"It 's a little musty, perhaps, but —"

She stopped so suddenly that Pats turned toward her. With a look of surprise she was pointing to the dining-table, close beside them. In the centre of this table, and very white against the dark oak, lay an envelope. Upon it had been placed a silver spoon to prevent disturbance from any possible gust of air through the open door.

"Some one has been here!" And she regarded Pats with startled eyes.

Before touching the letter he instinctively cast a look about the room for other evidence. While he was doing it, Elinor pointed toward the farther end of the cottage, to the kitchen table, and whispered:

"Look!"

Upon that table rested a pile of cans, boxes, and sundry packages. For a short moment both regarded in silence this almost incredible display. Then Pats took up the letter. On the envelope was no address — no name nor writing whatsoever. He turned it over in his fingers. "I suppose it is intended for the old gentleman, the owner of the place."

"And how careful they are that nobody shall know his name."

"There must have been several men here to bring up all these provisions, and whoever left the letter had no intention of giving the old gentleman away," and Pats tossed the letter upon the table.

Elinor in turn picked it up and looked it over. "I *would* like to know what it says."

"So would I," said Pats. "Let 's open it."

"Open another man's letter!" And she frowned.

"It may not be a letter. It may be some information as to when they are coming again, or what he is to do about provisions or something important for us to know. Our getting away from here may depend on what is inside that envelope."

"Yes, that is possible."

"Well, open it."

But she handed it back to him. "No, *you* must do it."

Pats tore open the envelope. Elinor stepped nearer and stood beside him, that she also might read.

"It is in French." Then he began:

"*Monsieur le Duc* —"

"Why, the old gentleman was a duke!" exclaimed Elinor.

"I am not surprised. You know we always suspected him of being a howling swell. But this writing and the language are too much for me. You really must read it." And he put the paper in her hands.

Elinor's French was perfect, but after the first sentence Pats interrupted:

"Translate as you go along. It is too important to take chances with, and I never was at home in that deceitful tongue."

Elinor dropped into the chair that stood beside her. Pats sat upon the edge of the table.

MONSIEUR LE DUC:

It is with a grand regret that I find myself unable to pay my respects in person to your Grace, but a broken ankle keeps

me a prisoner in the cabin. If there is anything your Grace wishes to communicate, have the extreme goodness to send me a note by the bearer. He can be trusted.

I leave the stores following last instructions. Enclosed is the list. The bearer will bring to me your new list from behind the door, if by chance you are not at home.

Your Grace's devoted servitor,

JACQUES LAFENESTRE.

She laid the letter on the table. "What a shame! It really tells us nothing."

"Not a thing. Lafenestre might at least have mentioned the date of the next visit."

"They all seem dreadfully afraid we may learn something." She took up the other paper and unfolded it. "This is the list."

Then she read:

"Four sacks corn-meal,
Two sacks Graham flour,
Four boxes crackers,
Two barrels potatoes."

"Those must be downstairs," said Pats. "I see the cellar door is open."

Elinor continued:

"One box lemons,
Four dozen candles,
Four dozen Pontet Canet,
Six pounds tobacco —"

"Good!" said Pats. "Just what we need."

She went on:

"Four pounds coffee,
Four boxes matches,
One pocket-knife,
Six pairs woollen socks,
Six old maids —"

"Six *what?*"

"Six old maids: *vieilles filles* — that is certainly old maids."

"Yes, but, Heavens! What does he want so many for? And where are they? In the cellar?"

She smiled, still regarding the paper. "But you need n't worry. They are something to wear. It says six old maids, extra thick and double length."

"Double length! Well, each man to his taste. Go on."

"That is all," and she dropped the paper on the table and looked up into his face. Thoughtfully he stroked the three days' beard upon his chin. He was watching through the open door the last clouds of mist as they floated by, driven before the wind.

Suddenly he jumped to his feet. "Then you were right about the boat! You *did* hear one. And it was here an hour ago!"

Quickly he snatched a shotgun from the wall, rushed out of the house, down to the edge of the point and discharged one of the barrels. He shouted at the top of his voice, fired the second barrel and shouted again. For a few moments he stood looking off into the slowly dissolving fog, listening vainly for an answering sound.

Elinor joined him.

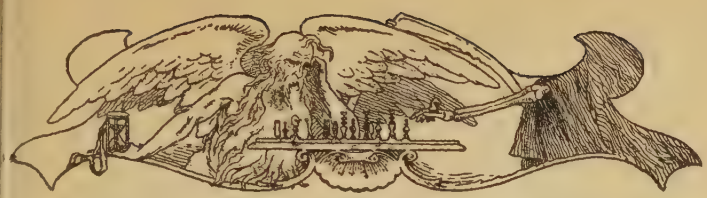
"I know it's of no use," he said, "for the wind is in the wrong direction. But I thought I would try it."

A moment later the final cloud of mist in which they stood was swept away, giving a clear view over all the waters to the south. And they saw, disappearing toward the west, around a promontory, a speck upon the blue horizon, and behind it a line of smoke.

In a melancholy silence both watched this far-away handful of vapor until it faded into space. When no trace remained of the vanished craft, Pats dropped the empty gun, slowly turned his head and regarded his companion. In Elinor's eyes, as they met his own, he recognized a gallant effort at suppressing tears. Remembering her resolve of yesterday he smiled, — a smile of admiration, of gratitude, and encouragement.

She also smiled, for she read his thoughts. And something more was plainly written in his face, — that self-effacing, immortal thing that lovers live on; and it shone clear and honest from this lover's eyes. Whereupon she stepped forward; he gathered her in his arms, and an ancient ceremony was observed, — very ancient, indeed, primitive and easily executed.

Solomon, weary of this oft-repeated scene, looked away with something like a sigh, then closed his eyes in patience.



XIV

PILGRIMS

ANOTHER June.

Along the northern shore of the St. Lawrence Gulf, through the cold, gray light of early dawn, a yacht was steaming eastward.

Leaning against the rail, near the bow, a woman with eager eyes watched the elusive coast. But this coast, in the spreading light, was rapidly revealing itself, becoming less ethereal, more savage and majestic. The woman was daintily attired. Every detail of her apparel, from the Parisian hat to the perfect-fitting shoes, while simple and designed expressly *pour le voyage*, was sumptuous in its simplicity. Although about thirty-five years of age, her round, rather wide face, graceful figure, and vivacious expression would have made de-

ception easy if she cared to practise it. In feelings, in manner, and in appearance, she was eighteen. And she would never be older. A peculiar droop at the outer corners of two large and very dark eyes, and a mouth — too small for the face — with a slight and rather infantile projection of the upper lip gave a plaintive, half-melancholy expression to an otherwise merry and youthful face.

Behind her, pacing to and fro, a strongly built, elderly man with heavy face and heavy hands, also watched the coast.

"*Voila, Jacques!*" and the lady pointed to a promontory in front, just revealed by the vanishing mist. "*Le voila, n'est-ce pas?*"

The man stepped forward and stood beside her. After a careful scrutiny he replied, also in French:

"Truly, I think it is."

"*Ah, le bonheur!* At last! And how soon shall we land?"

He hesitated, stroking the end of his nose with a stubby finger. "In less than two hours."

"In less than two hours! Absurd! You mean to say in less than twenty minutes, is it not?"

He shrugged his shoulders in respectful protestation. "But, Princess, deign to remember that we are still some miles from this headland, and that Monsieur, your father, is yet farther away, — some fifteen miles, at the very end of the bay which lies beyond."

She frowned and turned away. "Are we going as fast as possible?"

"I think so."

"Well, if you are not sure of it, Jacques, go down and tell that engineer to enliven his exasperating machinery. Make everything turn faster, or I shall jump into the sea and swim ahead. It is of a slowness to rend the nerves."

Jacques Lafenestre moved away to carry out this order. From his youth up he had served this lady and her parents. And when the father, for excellent reasons, left France in haste and came into the wilderness, the old servant followed. Later on he settled in Quebec as keeper of an inn. And ever since that day he had maintained communication with his master.

As the Princess walked impatiently up and down the deck, erect and with elastic tread, often looking at her watch and frowning, she gave the impression of a commanding little per-

son, much accustomed to having her own way —and with no talent for resignation. And when, a few moments later, another individual appeared upon the deck, a tall, thin, dark-robed ecclesiastic, evidently of high degree, with fine features and a stately bearing, she hastened to express her annoyance. To his polite greeting she replied rapidly:

"Good-morning, your Grace; but tell me, did you ever see anything like this boat? Did you ever imagine a thing could crawl with such a slowness — such a slowness? I shall die of it! I believe the screw is working backwards."

The Archbishop smiled, — that is, his mouth lengthened, for mirth and he were strangers, — "But it seems to me we move, Princess, and quite rapidly.'

"Rapidly! Well, never mind. Time and the wind will get us there. But why are you up so early? This is an hour when gentlemen are abed.'

"I could not sleep."

"Ah, the misfortune! For you may have a hard day. Remember, you are to do your best, and use your strongest arguments. You will need them. My father is wilful."

"Have no fears, Princess, I shall do all in my

power, for the cause seems righteous. The Duc de Fontrévault is, as you say, too old a man to be left alone under such conditions."

"Surely! And you are the one of all others to convince him. He will not listen to the rest of us. And don't fail to impress upon him his duty to his family. That is your strongest point, is it not?"

"Yes, and that now he can return with safety."

She shook her head. "No, do not rely too much on that, for he loves his wilderness. And he has known for a long time all danger was past. Better attack his conscience, and his sense of duty."

"As you say, Princess. And I shall spare no effort."

"Then you will succeed." And looking up with a smile, "You could convince anybody of anything, dear Archbishop. A few words from you, if you could only get him alone, and the devil himself would turn over a new leaf — perhaps join the Church. Who knows?"

For these sentiments his Grace had no responsive smile. This lady from Paris, while a good Catholic, seemed to have so little reverence for certain sanctities that he was always on his

guard. Her nature was not of the sort he preferred to deal with. There were too many conflicting elements. No one could tell with precision just when she was serious or when she was having a little fun. And, moreover, the dignity of an archbishop was not a thing to be compromised. But she was a *grande dame*, a person of great influence — also of great wealth and a free giver. And the Archbishop was no fool.

As they rounded the promontory and came in sight of the bay the emotion of the Princess was apparent. Impatiently she walked the deck. With the sun once fairly above the water, the little point of land at the farther end of the bay showed clearly in the morning light.

She beckoned the old servant to her side.

"There it is, Jacques! I see distinctly the cottage, a little mass of green against the shadows of the pines. And surely there is smoke from the chimney! My father is an early riser; already up and cooking his breakfast. Is it not so, Jacques?"

"Yes, I do not doubt Monsieur le Duc cooks his breakfast at this moment."

"What enormous trees!" she went on. "Beautiful, beautiful! And they stretch away

forever. An ocean of pines! I had forgotten they were so tall — so gigantic. How many minutes now, Jacques, before we arrive?"

Jacques frowned and shrugged his heavy shoulders. "I shall not tell you."

"Wicked old man!"

And again, through her glass, she studied the coast.

He had carried this lady in his arms before she could walk; he had superintended, in a way, her childhood; and so, like many old servants in France, he was not expected to bear in mind, at all times, certain differences in birth.

With a fresh enthusiasm she exclaimed: "And there, down below, to the right, is the little beach — the ravishing little beach! How I loved it! Here, take the glasses, Jacques, and regard it."

Jacques regarded. "Yes, it is a good beach."

She dropped the glasses in their case, folded the daintily gloved hands upon the rail, and for several moments gazed in silence at the coast in front. Her face, in repose, became somewhat sadder, and now there was a moisture in the eyes.

"Tell me again, Jacques, just how long it is since you were here?"

"Eight months."

"Much can happen in eight months."

"Yes, without doubt, but then it is to be remembered that when I was here last, in the month of September — all went well."

"You did not see him yourself, however."

"No, my broken ankle kept me aboard, but those who went ashore with the provisions brought a good report."

"But they did not *see* him."

"No, for he was away, probably on one of his hunting trips. But why disquiet yourself, Princess? We see the smoke rising from the chimney."

"Yes, it is true. You have reason."

When, at last, they arrived, the Princess was one of the first to land, and she hastened up the narrow path to the grove above. Although in haste to greet her father, she paused among the big trees to inhale the piney fragrance. With a smile of rapture she gazed upward and about. These old friends! How unchanged! And how many years they carried her back! As a very little girl her imagination had revelled without restraint and, to her heart's desire, in this enchanted grove. And now she was listening to the old-time murmurings, high above — the

same plaintive whispering — the familiar voices, never to be forgotten — that told her everything a little girl could wish to hear, and whenever she cared to hear it.

But she lingered for a moment only. With eager steps she hurried toward the cottage — picturing to herself an old gentleman's amazement when he recognized his visitor.

The door was open. She stood upon the threshold and looked in — and listened. No sound came to her ears except from the old clock behind the door. How familiar this solemn warning of the passing time! It seemed a part of her youth, left behind and suddenly found again. But her heart was beating many times faster than the stately ticking of this passionless machine. Silently she entered and stood beside the table. She saw the hangings, the pictures, the busts, the furniture, precisely as she had known them, years ago.

From behind the tapestry came a sound, faintly, as of some one moving. She smiled and there was a quivering of the lips. Then, in a low but clear voice, she said:

"*Petit père.*"

XV

REVELATIONS

THE rustle of a sudden movement — and an exclamation half suppressed — came from within the chamber. Then the tapestry was pushed aside.

The Princess, at sight of the figure that emerged, took a backward step, her smile of welcome supplanted by a look of wonder. Another woman stood before her, also pausing in surprise, a hand still holding the tapestry. This woman was young and slight of figure, erect, dark-haired, and sunburned. In a single glance the quick eye of the Princess took in a number of details. She noticed that the stranger wore a jacket so faded that no trace of its original color remained; that the skirt, equally faded, was also stained and patched. But to the critical Parisian it was obvious that these garments, although threadbare, frayed, and weather-beaten, fitted extremely well.

Now, while the Princess was the more surprised of the two, the girl in the faded garments experienced a greater bewilderment. For this visitor bore a startling resemblance to the miniature, — the wife whose grave was among the pines. And Elinor stared, as if half awake, at the round face, the drooping eyes, and the very familiar features of this sudden guest. Even the arrangement of the hair was unchanged, and the infantile mouth appeared exactly as depicted in the little portrait that hung beside her. Had this portrait come to life and stood near its own chair, the effect would have been the same.

But the lady from Paris was the first to find her voice. In French, with somewhat frigid politeness, she said:

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle; I expected to find another person here."

Also in French the girl replied:

"Madame is the daughter, perhaps, of the gentleman who lived here?"

The Princess, with her head, made a slight affirmative movement. And she frowned more from anxiety than resentment as she asked: "You say *lived* here. Does he not live here now?"

And she read in the face before her, from

its sympathy and sadness, the answer she dreaded.

Elinor, before replying, came nearer to the table. "Do you speak English?"

The Princess nodded, and seated herself in the chair of the miniature, and with clasped hands and a pale face, whispered:

"He is — dead?"

Elinor took the opposite chair. "May I tell you about it in English? I can do it more easily and better than in French."

"Certainly, certainly. And tell me all — everything."

Bravely the Princess listened. The tears flowed as she heard the story, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes, and even trying to smile at times in grateful sympathy for the narrator's efforts at consolation.

"Tell me how he looked the day you found him. Did he seem to have been — ill — to have suffered?"

"We thought him asleep. There was no trace of suffering. The color of his face surprised us."

When the story of his burial was finished, the Princess rose from her seat, came around and stood by Elinor, and took her hand. "I

owe you so much. You were very good and considerate. I am grateful, very grateful. He was unfortunate in his life. It is a consolation to know his death was happy, and that he was reverently buried."

Then Elinor, after hesitating, decided to ask a question.

"If it is no secret, and if you care to do it, would you mind telling me why he came across the water, out here in the forest, and lived in such a way?"

"Assuredly! And even if it were a secret I should tell you. In the first place, he was the Duc de Fontrévault, a very good name in France, as perhaps you know. He fell in love — oh, so fiercely in love! — with a lady who was to marry — well, who was betrothed to a king. It sounds like a fairy tale, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"It does, indeed!"

The Princess was now sitting on the arm of Elinor's chair, looking down into her face, in a motherly, or elder sisterly, sort of way.

"Well, you would know all about the king if I told you. He died only the other day, so you will soon guess him. *C'était un vaurien, un imbécile.* My father not only loved this —"

She stopped, abruptly, leaning forward with

one hand upon the table. "*Mais, Mon Dieu!* there is my portrait! My old miniature of twenty years ago! How came it there?" And she pointed to the opposite chair.

"We found it hanging there when we came, and have never disturbed it."

"You found it hanging there, on the back of that chair?"

"Yes."

"My own chair — where I used to sit! So, then, I was always before him!"

Elinor nodded. In the eyes of the Princess came fresh tears. She undertook to say more, but failed; and getting up, she walked around the table and dropped into Pats's chair, gurgling something in French about the *petit père.* Then she broke down completely, buried her face in her hands, and made no effort to control her grief.

When she recovered composure, her self-reproaches were bitter for allowing so many years to go by without a visit to this devoted parent. Smiling as she dried her eyes, — the eyes with the drooping corners, old friends to Elinor, — she said: "You, also, had me for a guest all this time."

"No, for a hostess. It is your house."

"And where do *you* sit?"

"Here, where I am."

"Then I have been your *vis-à-vis?*"

"Yes."

The Princess smiled. "Well, my face must be terribly familiar to you. Perhaps you recognized me at first?"

"Yes; I supposed you must be his daughter. But we believed the portrait to be your mother."

"How amusing! But poor mamma! there is no portrait of her here. She came away in too much of a hurry to stop for trifles."

She studied the miniature in silence, then, leaning back in her chair:

"*Mais, voyons!* I was telling something."

"About your father — why he came here."

"Ah, yes! Well, for a man to marry, or try to marry — or to dream of marrying — a princess formally betrothed to a king was *quelque chose d'inouïe.* But he was badly brought up, this little father of mine: always having his own way, — *un enfant gâté,* — you know, a child made worse — a child damaged — hurt — what am I trying to say?"

"A spoiled child."

"Of course! But the King also was a spoiled child, which is to be expected in a king-

However, that did not smooth things for my little father, as the King was beside himself with rage — furious, wild!"

"He was jealous?"

The Princess laughed — more of a triumphant chuckle than a laugh. "And well he had reason!"

"Then the lady preferred your father to the King?"

"*Mon Dieu!* She had eyes." Then, with a slight motion of a hand: "And she had sense."

Elinor smiled. "But a king is a great catch."

The little lady shrugged her shoulders. "That made nothing to her. She was as good as the King. She was a *grande* princess. Not an every-day princess, like me."

"Are *you* a princess?" Elinor asked in surprise.

"Yes, an ordinary princess — the common, every-day kind. But *she* was a *princesse royale*. And so he did this." With a comprehensive gesture of both her hands she indicated the tapestries, paintings, busts, furniture, and the entire contents of the house.

"You mean he brought his own possessions off here, across the water?"

"Precisely."

"And did he bring the Princess with him?"

"What a question! It is evident, Mademoiselle, that you were not acquainted with my father, the Duc de Fontrévault."

"Then this princess was your mother?"

"Yes."

"And that is her grave out there, beneath the pines, next to his?"

The Princess nodded, and blinked, but smiled: "Poor mamma! She only lived a few years after that; I was nine when she died."

"Were you born here?"

"In there." And she glanced toward Elinor's chamber.

"You must have had a lonely childhood."

"No. In those days we had a servant — and a cow."

"But why should your father and mother escape to this wilderness? Surely a woman may marry whom she pleases in these days."

"Certainly. But an agent was sent to arrest my father — on a legal pretext — and in the quarrel this agent — also a gentleman of high rank — was killed. So that was murder. Just what his Majesty wished, perhaps. And my father, in haste, packed a few things on a ship and disappeared."

"A few things!"

"The King never knew where he went. Nor did any one else. But enough of myself and family. Tell me of your coming here. And of your friend. Is she still here?"

"My friend was a man."

"Ah!"

The Princess raised her eyebrows, involuntarily. "Pardon me if I am indiscreet, but you are not married?"

"No."

Now this Parisian, with other Europeans, had heard startling tales about American girls; of their independence and of their amazing freedom. She leaned forward, a lively curiosity in her face. To her shame be it said that she was always entertained by a sprightly scandal, and seldom shocked.

"How interesting! And this gentleman, was he young?"

But the American girl did not reply at once. She had divined her companion's thoughts and was distressed, and provoked. This feeling of resentment, however, she repressed as she could not, in justice, blame the Princess — nor anybody else — for being reasonably surprised. So, she began at the beginning and told the tale of

the stupid error by which she was left with a man she hardly knew on this point of land; of their desperate effort to escape in September, by taking to a raft and floating down the river; how they failed to land and were carried out to sea, nearly perishing from exposure. She described their reaching shore at last, several miles to the east. And when she spoke of the early snow, in October, of the violent storms and the long winter, the Princess nodded.

"Yes, I remember those winters well. But we were happy, my father and I."

"And so were we," said Elinor.

"Then this stranger turned out well? A gentleman, a man of honor?"

"Yes, oh, yes! And more than that. He gave his life for mine."

From the look which came into Elinor's face, and from a quiver in the voice, the sympathetic visitor knew there was a deeper feeling than had been expressed. She said, gently:

"You are tired now. Tell me the rest of the story later."

"No, no. I will tell you now. One morning, about a month ago, the first pleasant day after a week of rain, we started off along the bank of the river to see if the flood had carried

away our raft — the new one. Just out there, in the woods, not far from here, I stepped to the edge of the bank and looked down at the water. The river was higher than we had ever seen it, — fuller, swifter, with logs and bushes in it. Even big trees came along, all rushing to the sea at an awful speed."

"Yes, I know that river in spring. The water is yellow, and with a frightful current, — fascinating to watch, but it terrifies."

Elinor nodded. "Fascinating to watch, yes. But Pats told me — "

"Pats?"

"My friend. His name was Patrick."

"And Pats is the little name — the familiar — for Patrick?"

"Sometimes."

"Ah, I never knew that! But pardon me. Please go on."

"He told me to come back — that the bank was undermined by the river and might give way. He said: 'Whoever enters that river today leaves hope behind.' At the very instant I started back the earth under me gave way, and — and, well, I went down to the river and under the water — an awful distance. I thought I should never come up again. But I did come

up at last, gasping, half dead, several yards from the shore. The current was carrying me down the river, but I saw Pats on the bank above, watching me. His face was pale and he was hurrying along to keep near. Oh, how I envied him, up there, alive and safe!"

"Poor child! I can well believe it!"

"He cried out, 'Try and swim toward the shore! Try hard!' And I tried, but was carried along so fast that I seemed to make no headway. Then I saw him run on ahead, pull off his shoes and outer clothes, slide down the bank and shoot out into the water toward me."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the listener. "Bravo! That was splendid!" And in her enthusiasm she rose, and sat down again.

Elinor sank back in her chair. But the Princess was leaning forward with wide open eyes and parted lips.

"Then what happened?"

"He reached me, caught me with one hand by my dress between the shoulders, and told me again to swim hard for the shore. It seemed hopeless, at first, for the current was frightful—oh, frightful! It washed us under and tried to carry us out again. But Pats pushed hard,

and after an awful struggle — it seemed a lifetime — we reached the shore."

"Ah, good!"

But in the speaker's face there came no enthusiasm. She closed her eyes, leaning back in her chair as if from physical weakness. The Princess got up, and once more came and stood by the girl's chair, and gently patted a shoulder.

"Tell me the rest later. There is no haste."

"I shall feel better for telling it now. I started to climb up the bank. It was steep, all stones and gravel, and a few little bushes. The stones gave way and kept letting me down — slipping backward. He was still in the water. I heard him tell me to go slow and not hurry. He was very calm, and his voice came up from beneath me, for —" and here she laughed, a little hysterical laugh — more of a sob than a laugh, as if from over-taxed nerves — "for I seemed to be sitting on his head."

The Princess also laughed, responsively.

"I shall never know just how it happened, but in one of my struggles the whole bank seemed to slide from under me into the river. I clung to a bush and called to him, and tried to look down, but — he was gone."

A silence followed. The Princess rested her

cheek against Elinor's hair, and murmured words of comfort. "How long ago did this happen?"

"A month ago."

More from sympathy than from conviction the Princess said:

"He may return. Stranger things have happened. Perhaps he was carried out to sea — and rescued."

Elinor shook her head. "He was buried beneath the rocks and gravel. If he had risen to the surface, I should have seen him, for the day was clear. No, I know where he is. I see him, all night long, in my sleep, lying at the bottom of the river, his face looking up."

"My child," said the Princess, "listen. With your sorrow you have precious memories. From what you have *not* told me of your Pats, I know him well. He loved you. That is clear. You loved him. That is also clear. Alone with him in this cottage through an endless winter, and perfectly happy! *Voyons*, you confessed all when you said 'we were happy!' He was the man of a woman's heart! With no hesitation, he gave his life for yours: to save you or die with you. Tell me, what can Heaven offer that is better than a love like that?"

She closed her eyes and drew a long breath.

"Ah, these Americans! These extraordinary husbands! I have done nothing but hear of them!"

"He was not my husband."

"But he was to be?"

"Oh, yes!"

The Princess rose, walked around the table and stood beside the chair that held her portrait.

"My child, I respect your grief. My heart bleeds for you, but you are to be envied." With uplifted eyebrows, and her head slightly to one side, she went on: "My husband, the Prince de Champvalliers is good. We adore one another. As a husband he is satisfactory, — better than most. But if, by chance, I should fall into a river, with death in its current, and he were safe and dry upon the bank —"

Sadly she smiled, and with a shrug of the shoulders turned about and moved away.

Erect, and with a jaunty step, she walked about the room, renewing acquaintance with old friends of her youth: with the little tapestried fables on the chairs and sofa; with certain portraits and smaller articles. But it was evident that the story she had heard still occupied her mind, for presently she came back to the table

and stood in front of Elinor. With a slight movement of the head, as if to emphasize her words, she said, impressively, yet with the suggestion of a smile in her half-closed eyes:

"Were I in your place, my child, I should grieve and weep. Yes, I should grieve and weep; but I should enjoy my sorrow. You are still young. You take too much for granted. You are too young to realize the number of women in the world who would gladly exchange their living husbands for such a memory." She raised her eyebrows, closed her eyes, and murmured, with a long, luxurious sigh: "The heroism! the splendid sacrifice! I tell you, Mademoiselle, no woman lives in vain who inspires in an earthly lover a devotion such as that!"

XVI

NEWS FROM THE WORLD

JACQUES soon appeared. As his knowledge of English was scant, the Princess gave him the story she herself had heard. Great was his horror on learning that when last he came — in September — and left the usual provisions, the Duc de Fontrévault had been in his grave since the previous June.

He asked many questions. Elinor told him everything that could be of interest, and the Princess listened eagerly to these replies. The old servant seemed pleased when Elinor turned to him with a smile and said, in his own language: "So you are the French Fairy. That is what we always called you after finding your letter. Our lives were saved by that unexpected supply of food."

Then they talked of other matters, — of what things should be carried back to France.

And as the strength and energy of the American girl seemed to have gone — owing, perhaps, to a too meagre diet — the Princess insisted upon having her own maid sent up to pack the trunks. Jacques departed on this errand, and to get one or two men. He soon returned with them, and accompanied by the Archbishop. With a half-suspicious interest His Grace studied this young woman, still seated in her usual place by the table, her eyes, with a listless gaze, following the daughter of the house as she opened drawers and cabinets.

His Grace was standing by the big tapestry, between the two busts, his hands behind him.

"Pardon me, my child," he said with a deep-toned benevolence, calculated to impress the guiltless and to awe the guilty, "but what I find it difficult to understand is why your friends did not look for you. They certainly must have guessed the situation."

Elinor shook her head gently, as if she also recognized the mystery.

"To what do you attribute this singular indifference to your fate on the part of your family and friends?"

"I cannot guess. I have no idea."

"It was purely accidental your — your arrival here?"

"Naturally."

In this reply there was something that smote the Archbishop's dignity. It seemed verging upon impertinence. Again he scrutinized the faded garments, the sunburned face, the hands somewhat roughened by toil, now folded on the table before her. His perceptions in feminine matters were less acute than those of the Princess. He remembered a young man had been a companion to this girl in this cottage, and during a whole year. It was only natural that the Princess, in treating this person with so much consideration, should be misled by a very tender, romantic heart, and by a Parisian standard of morality too elastic and too easy-going for more orthodox Christians. Into his manner came a suggestion of these thoughts, — his tone was less gracious, a trifle more patronizing. But as the victim supposed this to be his usual bearing, she felt no resentment.

"It was certainly a most unprecedented — one might almost say, incredible — blunder. And in daylight, too."

She nodded.

"Do I understand that you came here in a steamboat?"

"Yes."

"And the steamboat, after leaving you and the young man, kept on her course toward Quebec?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember the name of the boat?"

"The *Maid of the North.*"

"The *Maid of the North!*"

Elinor took no notice of this exclamation of surprise. In a purely amiable manner she was becoming tired.

"The *Maid of the North*, did you say?"

"Yes."

"But, my child, when was that? When were you left here?"

With a sigh of weariness, she replied: "A year ago this month, on the ninth of June."

"The ninth of June," he repeated, in a lower tone, more to himself than to her. "Why — then, she was lost between this point and Quebec."

"Lost?"

And Elinor looked up at him with startled eyes.

"Yes." Then he added: "But I see that you could not have known it."

"Do you mean the *Maid of the North* never reached Quebec?"

"Nothing has been heard of her since the eighth of last June. On that day she was spoken by another steamer near the Magdalen Islands."

Elinor had risen from her chair, and stood leaning against the table. "That is horrible! horrible! It does not seem possible! What do they think became of her?"

"Nobody knows. There are several theories, but nothing is certain. You are probably the only survivor."

"But were there no traces of her, — no wreckage, nothing to give a clew?"

"Nothing."

With drooping head and a hand across her eyes, she murmured: "Poor Louise! And my uncle — and Father Burke!" And she sank back into her chair.

The Archbishop took a step nearer. "Did you know Father Burke?"

"He was a dear friend."

At this reply the eyebrows of the holy man were elevated. A light broke in upon him. With a manner more sympathetic than heretofore — and less patronizing — he said gently:

"Father Burke was a dear friend of mine, also, — an irreparable loss to the Church and to all

who knew him. Is it possible you are the young lady whom he held in such high esteem and affection, and of whom he wrote to me? Were you in his spiritual charge, with thoughts of a convent?"

She nodded.

Into his face came a look of joy. Then, in a voice brimming over with tenderness and paternal sympathy:

"I cannot express my pleasure, my heartfelt gratitude, that you have been spared us. Of your exalted character and of your holy aspirations our dear friend spoke repeatedly. And now, in your hour of affliction, it will be not only the duty, but the joy and privilege of our Holy Church to serve you as counsellor and guide."

As the girl made no reply, he went on, in a subdued and gently modulated voice:

"At this time more than ever before, you must need the consolation of Religion. Am I not right in believing that you feel a deeper yearning for the closer love and protection of our Heavenly Father, for that security and peace which the outer world can never offer? And too well we know that the outer world is uncharitable and cruel. It might look askance

upon this strange adventure. But the arms of Our Mother are ever open. You are always her daughter, and with *her* there is nothing to forgive. All is love, and faith, and peace."

To this deeply religious girl, now stricken and weary, whose heart was numbed with grief, whose hope was crushed, these words came as a voice from Heaven. She held forth a hand which the prelate held in both his own.

"God bless you, my child."

XVII

VOICES OF THE WOOD

WHEN the Princess realized the somewhat famished condition of her new acquaintance she ordered a tempting lunch from the yacht, and had it served in the cottage: fresh meat, with fruit, vegetables, and cream and butter — new dishes among the Pines of Lory! Of this repast the Archbishop partook with spirit.

"Truly an invigorating air. What an appetite it gives!" And he devoured the viands with a priestly relish, but always with archepiscopal dignity. The person, however, for whom the meal was served leaned back wearily in her chair, barely tasting the different dishes.

"You will starve, my child," said the Princess, gently. "Really, you must eat something to keep alive."

The effort was made, but with little success. And in Elinor's face her friend divined an over-mastering grief.

The two women, after lunch, strolled out among the pines, toward the bench by the river. It became evident to the Princess, from the manner in which her companion leaned upon her arm, that days of fasting — and of sorrow — had diminished her strength. Upon the rustic bench Elinor sank with a sigh of relief. But into her face came a smile of gratitude as her eyes met those of the little lady who stood before her, and who was looking down with tender sympathy.

To Elinor's description of how she and Pats found the old gentleman reclining upon this same bench, the Princess gave the closest attention. Every detail was made clear by the narrator, who took the same position at the end of the seat, crossing her knees and leaning a cheek upon one hand, as if asleep. Then the Princess, after asking many questions, took the vacant place beside her and they sat in silence, looking across the river, to the woods beyond. To both women came mournful thoughts, yet with pleasant memories. And soothing to the spirit of each was the murmur of the woods.

To Elinor this plaint of the pines was always a consoling friend: a sad but soothing lullaby which now had become a part of her existence. It recalled a year of priceless memories. But these memories of late had become an unbearable pain, — yet a pain to which she clung.

For the Princess, also, there were memories, stirred by these voices overhead, but softened by time. Hers was not the anguish of a recent sorrow.

From these day-dreams, however, she was brusquely awakened. With no word of warning, the girl at her side had sprung to her feet and faced about. Into her face had come a look of unspeakable joy. Her lips were parted in excitement, and a sudden color was in her cheeks.

This transformation from deepest grief to an overpowering ecstasy alarmed her companion. And in Elinor's eyes there was a feverish eagerness, intense, almost delirious, as she exclaimed:

"You heard it?"

"What?"

"That sound! The notes of a quail!"

The Princess shook her head.

"Oh, yes, you heard it! Don't say you did not hear it!"

Then, when the Princess, still looking up in vague alarm, gently shook her head a second time, Elinor reached forth a hand imploringly, as it were, and whispered:

"You must have heard it. The whistle of a quail, back there in the woods?"

To the little woman upon the bench these words had no significance, but her sympathy was aroused. That sensitive nerves and an aching heart should succumb, at last, to despair and loneliness and fasting she could readily understand, and she answered, kindly:

"I heard no bird, dear child, but it may be there. Perhaps your hearing is better than mine."

At this reply all the joy went out of Elinor's face, leaving a look so spiritless and despairing that her friend, who could only guess at her companion's thoughts, added:

"Or it may be nothing. You merely dreamed it, perhaps."

Elinor straightened up. She drew a long breath, and murmured, in a low voice from which all hope had fled:

"Of course! I dreamed it," and sank wearily into her place upon the bench.

Furtively, but with pity in her face, the Prin-

cess regarded the drooping head and closed eyes; then she stood up and placed a hand affectionately upon Elinor's shoulder.

"I understand your feelings. Rest here until the boat goes."

Indicating, with a wave of her hand, the big trees towering high above, she added:

"Your last moments with these old friends shall be respected. I am going to the two graves over there, and will return before it is time to start."

She walked away, into the grove.

Again, among the shadows of these pines, came memories of her childhood, with the feeling of being alone in a vast cathedral. And the fragrance, how she loved it! And she loved this obscurity, always impressive and always solemn, yet filling her soul with a dreamy joy.

In her passage between the columns of this shadowy temple she stopped and turned about for a parting glance at her friend. In the same position, her head upon her hand, Elinor still sat motionless, a picture of patient suffering. For a moment the Princess watched her in silence, then slowly turned about and started once again upon her way. Only a step, how-

ever, had she taken when the color fled from her cheeks and she halted with a gasp of terror. Gladly would she have concealed herself behind the nearest tree, but she dared not move.

In the gloom of the forest, scarcely a dozen yards away, a figure was moving silently across her path in the direction of the cottage. Such a figure she had seen in pictures, but never in the flesh. The North American savage she always dreaded as a child; and once, at a French fair, she had seen a wild man. This creature recalled them both. He was brown of color, with disorderly hair and stubby beard, and no covering to his body except strips of cloth, faded and in rags, suspended from one shoulder, held at the waist by a cord, and dangling in tatters about his legs. Bending slightly forward as he walked — or rather glided — among the pines, he was peering eagerly in the direction of the house. Had his gaze been less intent, he would have seen this other figure, the woman watching him in silent terror. Furtively she glanced about the grove to see if other creatures were stealing from tree to tree. But she failed to discover them.

Now the Princess, while fashionable and friv-

olous, and reprehensible in many ways, was not devoid of courage. And her conscience told her to give warning to her friends. This heroic decision was swiftly made. In making it, however, her cheeks grew paler.

But she was spared the sacrifice. As she drew in her breath for the perilous attempt, she saw the man himself stand still and straighten up. Then, before she could utter the warning, — before her own little mouth was ready, — the shadowy silence of the wood was broken, not by the dreaded warwhoop, but by an imitation, startlingly perfect, of the notes of a quail.

That this was a signal to his followers she had no doubt. But suddenly, while these clear notes were yet in the air, the stillness of the pines was again disturbed by a cry — a cry of joy, intense and uncontrolled — from behind her, toward the river. She turned about. In astonishment she saw the grief-stricken maiden — a moment ago too weak to walk alone — already lifted from the rustic bench as by a heavenly hand, now flying in this direction over the brown carpet of the pines, swift and light of foot, with wings, it seemed. The savage, too, had heard the cry and already he was running toward the approaching figure. And he passed

so near the Princess that he would have seen her had he wished.

They met, the wild man and the girl. And the mystified spectator — mystified for a moment only — saw the maiden fling herself upon this denizen of the wood and twine her arms about his neck. And he, with a passionate eagerness, embraced her, then held her at arms' length, that again he might draw her to him, kissing her hair, mouth, forehead.

From the rapturous confusion of exclamations, of questions interrupted and unanswered, the Princess understood. For a moment she looked on in wonder, fascinated by this astounding miracle. But she soon recovered. With a lump in her throat she began backing away, to escape unobserved. Elinor, through her tears, happened to see the movement and came forward, leading the savage by the hand. With a new light in her eyes, and her voice all a-quiver, she exclaimed:

"This is my Pats!"

The Princess courtesied.

"And, Pats, this is the Princess — the Princess de Champvalliers: our girl of the miniature."

Pats nodded — for he recognized the eyes

with the drooping corners — and he smiled and bowed. And the Princess, as she looked into his face and forgot the wild hair and scrubby beard, the stains, the rags, and the nakedness, met a pair of unusually cheerful, honest eyes, and impulsively held out her hand.

XVIII

A NUNNERY?

IN very few words Pats told his story.

As Elinor had believed, he was forced beneath the water by the sliding earth and stones; but instead of lying at the bottom he had been carried by the under-current far out toward the middle of the river. On coming to the surface, more dead than alive, he found himself among the branches of an uprooted pine, also speeding toward the sea, at the mercy of the torrent.

Numb with cold from the icy water, he clung to this friend all one day and night, ever drifting toward the Gulf. At last, when rescued, he was barely conscious. And on recovering his wits he found himself aboard a Government coaster just starting on a two months' cruise.

"I insisted on being landed. They refused at first, but when I told them the situation —

of the solitary girl I was leaving alone in the wilderness, — they not only put me ashore, but gave me all the provisions I could carry."

"Bravo! A boat-load of lovers!" exclaimed the Princess. "And they did well!"

"Indeed they did!" said Pats, "for they were pressed for time, and it cost them several hours. So, in high spirits, I started westward along the coast, expecting to get here in three or four days."

Then, turning to Elinor: "Do you remember the wide marsh we noticed from the top of that farthest hill to the east, at the end of our journey last autumn?"

"Yes, I remember. We thought it the mouth of a river."

"Well, it *was* the mouth of a river, with a vengeance. That marsh extends for miles on both sides of a river as impassable as ours. Ten days I tramped northward up the farther bank. And then, in swimming across, I lost nearly all my provisions, and most of my clothes."

With a slight bow to the Princess, he added, "I hope madam will pardon these intimate details: also certain deficiencies in my present toilet."

"Make no apologies, and tell everything," she answered, "I am one of the family."

Pats continued: "During nine days I travelled south, retracing my steps, but on this side of the river. The woods are different up there, with a maddening undergrowth, and it soon made an end of what clothes I had left. Yesterday morning I saw the sea again."

To every word of this narrative Elinor had listened, absorbed and self-forgetful. As for the Princess, she loved the unexpected, and here she found it. The more she studied Pats, the better she liked him and his cheerfulness, — a cheerfulness which seemed to rise triumphant above all human hardship. She took an interest in his unkempt hair and barbaric, four weeks' beard, in his scratched and sunburnt chest and arms. Even in the tattered remnants of his clothes she found a certain entertainment. And she noticed that while he stood talking in the presence of two ladies he appeared unembarrassed by his semi-nakedness, perhaps from the habit of it. And, after all, what cause for embarrassment? How many times, on the beach at Trouville, had she conversed with gentlemen who wore even less upon their persons?

Another surprise was given her when a brown

setter, from somewhere in the forest, came flying toward them, and threw himself upon the long lost Pats. And the dog's delight at the meeting was similar to Elinor's. He, in turn, was presented to the Princess, who patted his head.

"*Bon jour, Monsieur Solomon.* I am happy to meet you: and for your enthusiasm I have the profoundest regard."

Then, as they all started toward the cottage, Pats still answering Elinor's questions, there appeared among the pines a black figure which recalled pictures of Dante in the forest of Ravenna. This figure halted in surprise at sight of the half-naked savage approaching with an easy self-possession, a lady on either side. And evidently the savage was a welcome object — a thing of interest — of affection even, if outward signs were trustworthy. And his Grace, when presented to this uncouth object, made no effort at assuming joy. Whether from an unfamiliarity with wild men, or from some other reason, this creature proved offensive to him. The lately lamented lover appeared politely indifferent to the priest's opinion, — good or bad, — and this so augmented his Grace's irritation that his words of welcome

displayed more dignity than warmth. After proper congratulations on the return of her friend, he said to Elinor, in impressive tones, with a fatherly benevolence:

"We always rejoice when a human life is saved, but it would prove a sad misfortune, indeed, should it cause you to falter in your high resolve and return to worldly affairs."

Elinor instinctively edged a little closer to Pats and slid a hand in one of his, — a movement observed by the Princess.

His Grace, with yet greater impressiveness in tone and manner, added:

"Yours is not a nature to forget or lightly ignore a pledge once given. And please understand, my dear child, it is for your spiritual future that I remind you of your solemn words to our dear friend — to him who is no longer here to recall them to you, and whose beneficent influence is forever gone."

Into Elinor's face had come a look of pain, for these words to a conscience such as hers were as so many stabs. Pats frowned. Still clasping the fingers that had slid among his own, and with a slight upward movement of the chin, he took one step forward toward the prelate. But before he could speak the Princess acted quickly,

to avert a scene. In a vivacious, off-hand manner, yet with a certain easy authority, she said, smiling pleasantly in turn upon her three listeners:

"You speak of a convent? Ah, your Grace forgets something! Religion is a mighty thing. We all know that. But there is one thing mightier — and here are two of its victims. 'T is the thing that makes the world go round. You know what it is. Oh, yes, you know! And it has made archbishops go round, too; even Popes — and many times! And when once it gets you — well! *il s'en moque de la réligion et de touts les Saints* — for it has a heaven of its own. Moreover, we must not forget, your Grace and I, that this unconventional gentleman —"

Here she turned a mirthful glance upon Pats and his rags, and he smiled as his eyes met hers:

"That our unconventional gentleman has already tried to give his life for this girl. Moreover, he will do it again, whenever necessary, and she is not likely to forget it."

Indeed not, if truth were in the look that came to Elinor's eyes.

"Princess," said the Archbishop, "this is not

a matter for argument. It is a question to be decided by the lady's own conscience."

"But I have made no promise," said Elinor. "I told Father Burke it was my intention to enter a convent. It was merely the expression of a wish — not in the nature of a binding promise."

"But to me," said Pats, smiling pleasantly upon the Archbishop, "she *did* make a binding promise — a very definite promise of a matrimonial nature. If she enters a convent — I go too."

Thereupon the Princess laughed, — a gentle, merry laugh, spontaneous and involuntary. "A nunnery with a bridal chamber! *Fi, l'horreur!* Imagine the effect on the other sisters!"

At this utterance the Archbishop closed his eyes in reprobation. Then, with a paternal air he regarded Elinor. "Dear lady, I have no desire to argue, or to persuade you against your wishes — or against the wishes of your friends. Pardon me if I have appeared insistent. I only ask that you will not forget that our Church is your Church — that in sorrow and in trouble, and at all times, her arms are open to you."

Then addressing the Princess: "I am the bearer of a message from Jacques Lafenestre.

The baggage is aboard, and the yacht can sail whenever your Highness is ready."

With a ceremonious bow — ceremoniously returned by the group before him — his Grace strode slowly away toward the little path that led to the beach. The Princess also — after handing to Pats the key of the house — moved away in the direction of the two graves, promising the lovers another half hour for their parting visit to the cottage. She had gone but a few steps, however, when she stopped and wheeled about as if moved by a sudden thought.

"You know well the tapestry that screens the chamber. The scene in the Garden of Eden?"

Both nodded; and Pats exclaimed: "The most entertaining work of art I have ever seen!"

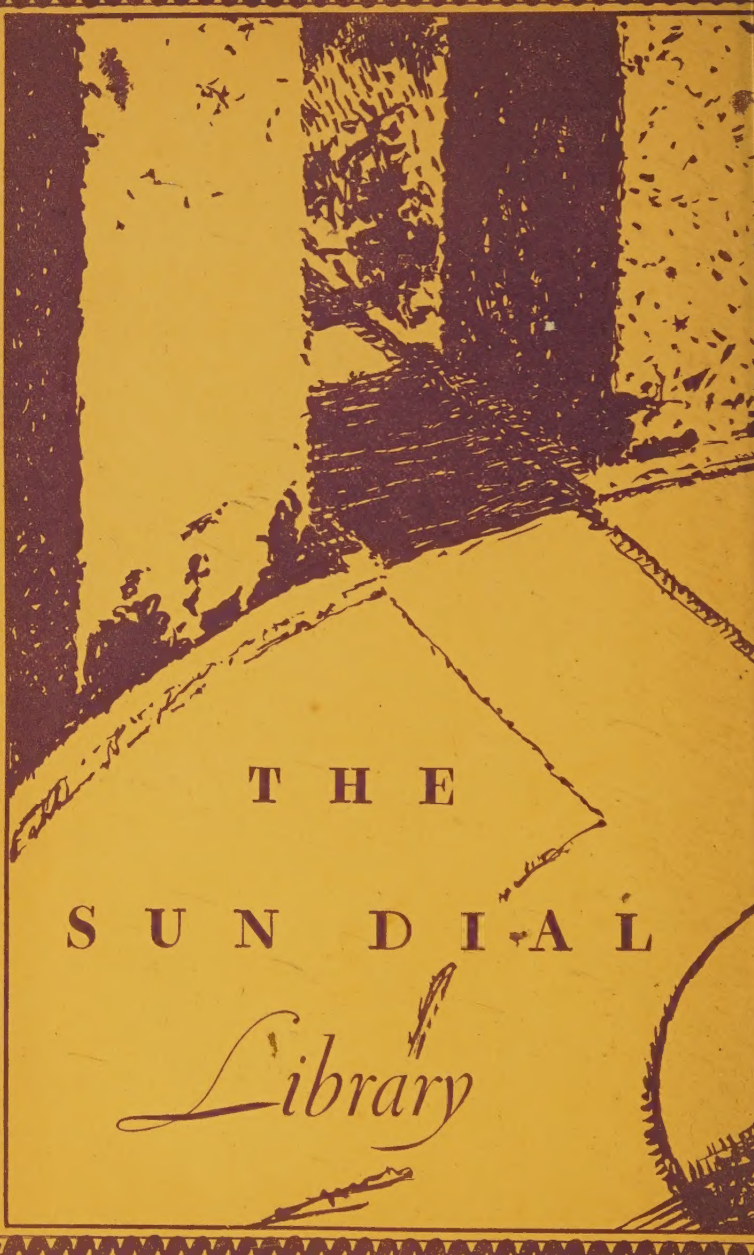
"I give it for my wedding present, so that Madame Pats may have a portrait of her husband as he appeared when first I met him."

With a smile and a nod she turned away and the jaunty figure was soon lost among the trees.

Once more alone, Pats and Elinor turned and looked into each other's eyes; and both discovered an overflowing happiness that choked all words — and all attempt at words.

Pats opened his arms. As of old, she entered, and the familiar rite was observed.

The surrounding silence remained unbroken. But in the murmuring of the pines, in that floating music now dear to both, there came to the reunited lovers a subdued but universal rejoicing — felicitations from above.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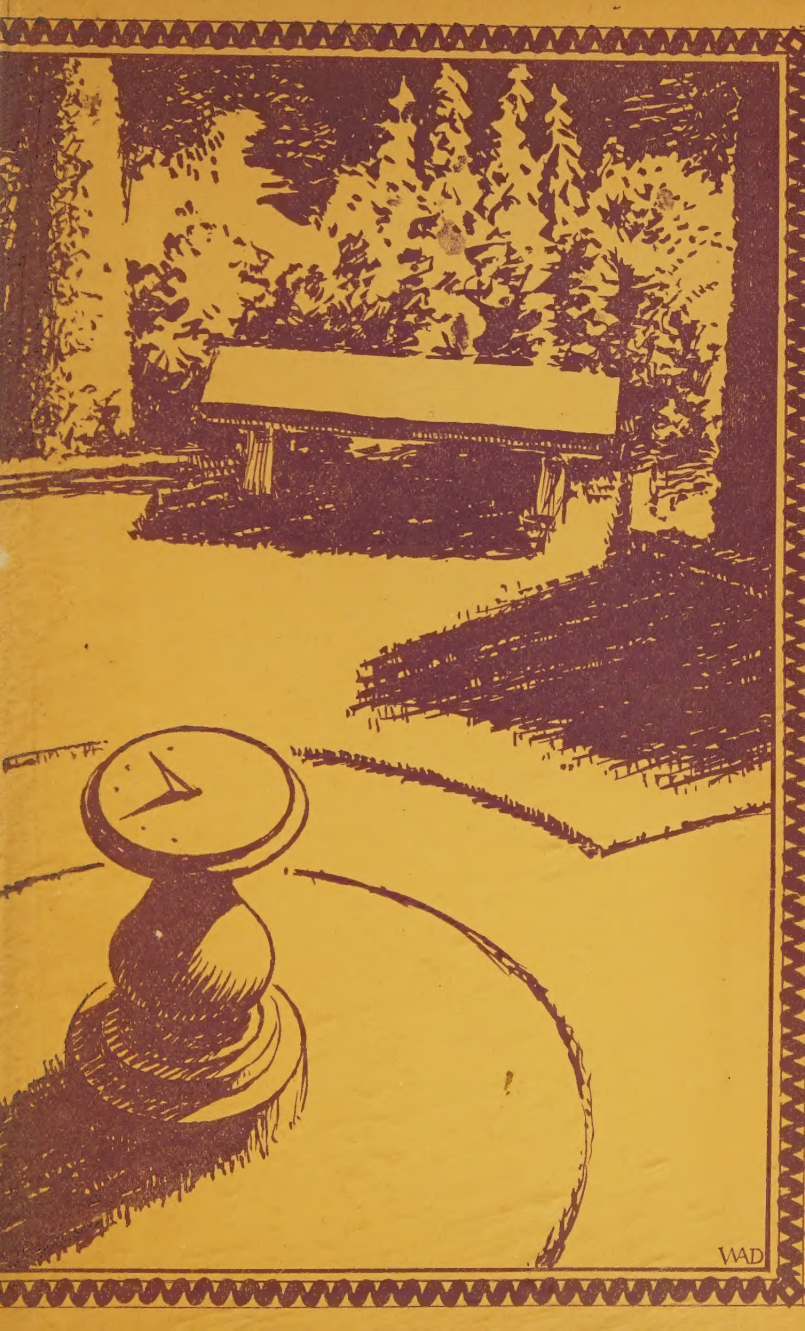
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